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"IT'S OK, IT'S ALL RIGHT, OH YEAH"

THE 'DUNEDIN SOUND' ? AN ASPECT OF
ALTERNATIVE MUSIC IN NEW ZEALAND 1978 - 1985

by
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As I lived in Dunedin during the period of this essay it is perhaps appropriate to acknowledge my links with this topic. I first became interested in the music of the so-called 'Dunedin Sound' bands in 1982 when as a twelve year old I bought a copy of The Clean's 'Great Sounds Great', after having heard a track off it on Radio New Zealand's nationwide Top Ten. Over the next few years, going to Roy Colbert's second-hand record shop every Friday after school, I began religiously buying every record by a Dunedin band that was released on Flying Nun. Living in South Dunedin and attending King's High School I had no contact with the people in these bands or their younger siblings. They remained as distant as overseas musicians. For me they were pop stars. By 1984, however, I began to realize that they were 'normal' people. I started seeing them around town and talking to them! That year, as a member of the Dunedin Junior Council, I began organizing under-age dances, involving the bands - this was the only opportunity I had to see them perform. In 1986 I started going to see these bands at pubs and venues like Chippendale House. Musically incompetent I began to write about the bands first for the *Midweek*, and then from 1989 for *Rip It Up*.

In writing this essay I have been assisted by numerous people, who deserve my thanks. First and foremost are those people who gave up their time to be interviewed. A special thank - you to Roger and Lesley at Flying Nun, Robert Scott, Martin Phillipps, Jeff Batts, David Kilgour, Jo and Graeme Downes, Shayne Carter, Denise Roughan, Richard Langston and Gerard O'Brien for photos, tapes, articles, and scrapbooks. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Professor Erik Olssen, for encouraging me to pursue this topic, and latterly for his help in 'fine-tuning' the text. For their support during panic-stricken weeks of October I must also thank my parents and Sally. Finally I would like to

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The title of this long essay is part of the chorus of The Clean song 'Oddity'.

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San Fransisco in the middle sixties was a very special time and place to be part of. Maybe it *meant something*. Maybe not, in the long run . . . but no explanation, no mix of words or music or memories can touch that sense of knowing that you were there and alive in that corner of time and the world. Whatever it meant . . .

Hunter S. Thompson.

INTRODUCTION:

The idea that the audience for rock/pop music is an active, heterogeneous community utilizing the music as an inspiration for action lies at the heart of the sociology of rock. To the extent it is the sociology of musical life that is being discussed, not the sociology of music as such. Lawrence Grossberg states the case succinctly:

Different fans seem to use the music for very different purposes and in very different ways; they have different boundaries defining not only what they listen to but what is included within the category of rock and roll.¹

The heterogeneous nature of the rock/pop audience, highlighted by Grossberg, results in listeners bringing different perspectives to the music ; an important point when discussing the concept of the 'Dunedin Sound'. This is a label which was initially coined by the New Zealand music media in response to the music of Dunedin bands released on the Flying Nun record label in the first half of the 1980s. Differing perspectives mean that for some people there will be a 'Dunedin Sound', while for others, with more empathy towards the varied style of the bands, there will not be. Overseas listeners with empathy for the music, hear the idiosyncracies of each band while acknowledging that collectively the bands involved constitute a different approach to rock/pop music. Writing on popular culture in New Zealand, Geoff Lealand argues that:

Those who claim that 'alternative' New Zealand bands such as The Chills or Aotearoa are producing something new - sounds unique to New Zealand ears - ignore the reality that they are merely producing competent, sometimes excellent, replications of music traditions born elsewhere in the world.²

¹ Quoted in P.Wicke, *Rock Music*, Cambridge, 1990, p.75

² G Lealand, *A Foreign Egg in Our Nest?*, Wellington, 1988, p.76.

Lealand's view can be juxtaposed with American reviews of The Chills and their Dunedin contemporaries which praise the music's originality. Lealand's claim for unoriginality is couched within a framework of the history of music traditions of which rock/pop music per se is one western musical tradition. In comparison American reviewers listen to the music as an example of a new departure within pop music.

Dunedin had contributed little to New Zealand music in the decades prior to the 1980s. In 1981, however, a three-piece band from the city, The Clean, with two low-budget recordings, achieved considerable national success. As New Zealand was to discover, they were but one band from a community of young musicians which had developed in Dunedin from 1978. There were four distinct waves of bands in this community. The first consisted of The Clean, The Same and Bored Games. The following wave, beginning in the winter of 1980, comprised The Stones, The Chills, The Verlaines and Sneaky Feelings. A third wave, which came to prominence by 1984, included The Rip, Look Blue Go Purple, Double Happys and The Orange. A fourth wave began in 1986 with the formation of Straitjacket Fits, Stephen and Snapper. After The Clean broke-up in 1982, The Chills became the band whose success was to gradually push the music of these Dunedin bands to the forefront of the New Zealand music scene, and by the end of the decade make a rapidly growing international audience aware of their existence.

Based around the song-writing talent of Martin Phillipps, The Chills showed even more than The Clean that a band from Dunedin could succeed. This went against the somewhat colonial relationship that existed between Auckland and New Zealand's other musical centres. Auckland is home to what constitutes the New Zealand's music industry. In terms of promoting local music it is a largely inactive music

industry. Multi-national record companies have offices here that do little else other than release music by foreign artists. The small size of the New Zealand market makes promoting indigenous music solely for profit a risky business. Although professional musicians playing original music do exist, original music in New Zealand is largely the concern of independent record labels, and musicians who support themselves through other employment or the unemployment benefit. Some of these musicians write music in the hope of gaining recognition by the mainstream music industry. There are also a large number of musicians who write 'alternative' music; music which does not fit into the definition of rock/pop music sanctioned by the mainstream music industry. The subjects of this study belong to this latter group. As Straitjacket Fits bassist David Wood said in 1990:

You just don't become rock n roll stars in New Zealand.
You just form a band because you've got this weird thing
inside you that's telling you to make music for some
reason or another. And you just do it.³

All the country's music centres, however, had bands which consciously aimed for success within the formula offered by the trends of the Top Twenty sales' chart. If they were serious in their aim, a band had to move to Auckland, which housed not only the music industry but a larger potential audience. Auckland's musicians tended to be very aware of the music industry and its potential role in helping them achieve success. The city, therefore, as befits the cosmopolitan nature of its component parts, was conscious of any new trends within the global phenomenon of pop/rock music, in both the mainstream and alternative genres. On a generalized level the development of bands in Auckland reflected these changing trends. Further south bands were less influenced by music fashions. This created the existence of a limited

³ quoted in *Elle*, June 1990, Flying Nun Press Files.

amount of regional variation in New Zealand music though it should be recognized that the variation tended to occur in the field of 'alternative music'.

Music from Wellington in this period was dominated by the high profile given to bands with an infected 'jazzy' sound. A strong tendency towards discovering the 'art' in rock music also existed amongst other musicians in the city. As the nation's capital the music also had a slightly more political bent than was found elsewhere in New Zealand. Alternative music in Christchurch was the product of a very definite family of musicians. These people were very concerned with the 'sound' of a band. In the early 1980s English band Joy Division became a major influence, giving the songs a 'dark', 'doomy' edge. Roger Shepherd who founded Flying Nun in the city, believes the 'garage' sound of Christchurch bands was contrived ; as he points out you cannot evolve into a garage band.⁴

Although all of these styles existed to a limited extent in Dunedin and the other musical centres, outsiders tend to notice what existed in large numbers, and label that unique. The guitar sound and its 'jangle' and 'drone' were what was seen as unique to Dunedin's alternative bands. As this essay will show the community of musicians also shared an attitude which valued the 'song' over its presentation and execution. It can be argued that the 'Dunedin Sound' is in one sense an inappropriate label for this set of attitudes. The aim of this essay will therefore be to establish exactly what shared attitudes and experiences the people involved in making this music possessed, as opposed to arguing for or against the existence of a 'Dunedin Sound'. The first chapter, with the accent on narrative, places the bands in a social

⁴ interview with Roger Shepherd, 7/2/91.

A 'garage band' is the label given to bands who have a primitive, messy sound. Generally they form amongst school friends and are comprised of musical novices. The idea being that they do little other than play around in a parent's garage.

context. Chapter two outlines the key attitudes shared by the bands. The following chapter will look at how these attitudes influenced the infrastructure which presented the music to a wider audience. The essay concludes with a discussion of the responses of this wider audience and hence the creation of the 'Dunedin Sound'.

ii)

Although John Dix has written a history of New Zealand rock/pop music there is no local academic literature on this genre.⁵ In what amounts to a call for action on the academic analysis of rock/pop music in this country, Roy Shuker pointed out in a 1990 article that, "in New Zealand not only is the general field of popular culture largely undeveloped. . . the sociological study of pop/rock music is almost totally neglected."⁶ In this article Shuker acknowledged that the fullest academic analysis of pop music in New Zealand is one chapter in Geoff Lealand's book on the influence of American popular culture. There is however a growing overseas literature on the sociology of rock/pop music. Writing on the field of rock/pop music was given legitimacy in

⁵ J. Dix, *Stranded in Paradise*, Wellington, 1988.

⁶ R. Shuker, 'Postmodernism and the Death of Vinyl: Reflections on the Sociology of Rock.', *New Zealand Sociology* 5 (2), 1990, p.137.

R. Shuker, 'Youth Culture, Youth Rhythms. Review Essay.' *Sites*, 14 (1987). p.110. In his review of Mike Brake's 1985 revision of *The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures*, Shuker argues that Brake's assessment of reasons for the scarcity of youth culture studies in Canada is applicable to New Zealand. It also provides an argument for the lack of applicability of British and American based subculture theories for New Zealand. Brake argues that subcultural styles in both Britain and the United States "are native to their immediate context and reinterpret the artifice of fashion into a subculture which makes sense of the local environment". Brake then argues that youth subcultures in Canada, due to their relatively smaller scale, lack the dramatic and socially visible form of their counterparts in Britain and the United States. In Canada the lack of a national identity and the strength of traditional ties to Britain and France, result in youth culture which is largely derivative and in which the oppositional force is highly muted

the mid 1970s when a group of British marxist sociologists gave a framework to the debate over the teenage problem. They analysed the various British youth groups of the preceding two decades by using the model of subcultures, which had been developed in deviancy theories, and argued that the teenage problem was a class problem.⁷ Youth groups such as the Mods and Rockers were thus seen as examples of an unconscious working - class resistance to the dominant capitalist system. The study of rock music became based around the Marxist theories of 'effect' and 'reflection'. As the field of study has developed, two separate strands of sociological analysis have appeared. The object of some research is the musical end - product, viewed as an entity in itself reflecting and influencing groups of people through its availability and popularity. The second strand focuses on the actual process of production, labour relations and the use of technology.⁸

The consumption of rock music, its symbolic function, receives the most attention. The role of listening as a leisure activity combined with the use of other cultural objects defines a subculture's use of music. Although it is acknowledged new playing styles are the product of fans and local scenes' idiosyncratic use of music as a form, little emphasis has been placed on those youths who make music. The emphasis is on the assimilation of music as an accessory of style, the giving of meaning to music through its use in youth's search for a separate identity. This occurs in the period between or near the end of a person's school career "when education becomes perceived as meaningless in terms of [their] work prospects and lasts until marriage"; the challenge at a symbolic level to the 'inevitability' of the 'naturalness' of class and gender

⁷ S. Frith, *The Sociology of Rock*, London, 1978, p.26

Wicke, op cit, p.81. "Subcultures are not subversive, but are an expression of the cultural process of differentiation which is characteristic of the way of life in highly developed capitalism. A process which begins to form at the point of contact between class-specific and age-specific experiences."

⁸ A. L. White, 'Introduction' in A. L. White (ed) *Lost In Music*, London, 1987. p.2

stereotypes.⁹

Rock/pop music is defined as "music produced for the simultaneous consumption of a large youthful audience".¹⁰ There is however no literature on music which is not the product of the multi-national music industry or aimed at a mass market. This makes most of the overseas literature irrelevant as a model for this study of 'alternative music' in New Zealand. The works of Simon Frith and Peter Wicke, two of the few studies available in New Zealand, will however, where appropriate be cited in the course of this essay.

⁹ M. Brake, *The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures*, London, 1980, p.23

¹⁰ Frith, *Sociology of Rock*, p.14

Chapter One- *Beginnings:*

"And then Johnny Rotten came along and saved
our lives . . ."

In 1970, nineteen year old Chris Knox arrived in Dunedin from Invercargill. A self acknowledged "stinking heaving mess", Knox became part of an alternative culture of sorts. A product of relatively affluent times Knox and his friends, who came to include Hamish Kilgour, Mick Dawson and Doug Hood, were not career oriented, spending their time trying to enjoy life; there was a "huge lust for getting out of it and having a good time."¹ Knox moved from job to job : these included working at a cemetery, making toasted sandwiches at a strip club, and delivering mail. The attempt to enjoy life became futile: "The only way for me to survive was to get pretty much roaring drunk every night. I went to the [Captain] Cook [Tavern] on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday."² After the pub closed, going to parties at people's flats was the only option. The result of the perceived general boredom in Dunedin, these parties, apart from providing a venue to drink, appeared to serve only two purposes: the opportunity to find someone to have sex with or to talk with friends about the latest rave record.³

The second purpose reflects the importance of music in Knox's social group. They were owners of large record collections comprising more left of centre, less contemporary music, such as American groups the Velvet Underground, The Stooges and 1960s British acts such as The

¹ Interview with Chris Knox, 7/2/91.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid*

Beatles, Captain Beefheart, and The Kinks. Apart from touring acts there was little live music in Dunedin. What did exist Knox, disliked. At the Cook, he use to constantly abuse local covers band Cruze and in fact whoever else was playing.⁴ Although Dawson had previously played guitar in a band, making their own music was not considered an option. After all they were fans not musicians. In 1977, however, they saw the British group the Sex Pistols on television. Fronted by Johnny Rotten, the Sex Pistols spearheaded what came to be termed punk rock:

It [Dunedin] was an incredibly depressing place to be after a while and we couldn't afford to be anywhere else, couldn't think of anywhere else to be. And then Johnny Rotten came along and saved our lives by showing there were other people around who were as bored shitless as we were and had a way of venting that. . .

. . . we saw the live clip of "Anarchy in the U.K.", it was extraordinary and electrifying like I imagined Iggy Pop would have been like in his first couple of years. It all clicked and made perfect sense- the interview outside Buckingham Palace, being yobs, getting away with it and becoming famous. I thought shit we can do that, we do that all the time, except we don't have TV crews.⁵

Soon after this Knox met two art students, Alec Bathgate and Mike Dooley, in the record shop where he worked. They too, had been trying to form a band, and with Knox and friends did just that. It was called The Enemy (partially after British music magazine New Musical Express, known as the NME). They found a venue, the end of year Art School Ball at the Old Beneficiaries Hall on the corner of Hanover Street and Filleul Street, and then only needed some songs to fill in the necessary two and a half hours. Two weeks before the Ball, Knox drafted in Mick Dawson to play bass, and the band dropped the covers they had been practicing to concentrate on their own songs. By 16 November they

⁴ A covers band is a band that plays other people's songs, generally those in the Top Twenty, or classic songs from years gone by.

⁵ Chris Knox, op cit.

had 20 songs which they played twice on the night. By also taking numerous long breaks, both planned and unplanned, they filled the required time.

The Art School Ball, Dunedin's first punk dance, was reviewed by friend and music critic Roy Colbert for New Zealand's only national music magazine *Rip It Up*:

The band finally come [sic] on. The bass player is unbelievably fine. Total commitment. He's also unbelievably important, because the guitar isn't heard at all for the first 20 minutes. . .

. . . The songs are simple and the words possibly quite good (some are forgettable and many inaudible) and the rhythms are relentless. Proper punk music. Great titles too- "I Wanna Die With You", "Jack Crap", "Pull Down The Shades", "Iggy Told Me", "Lou Reed", "Rainbow", "Government Health Warning" and of course "We Are The Enemy".⁶

Punk rock, in the form that inspired The Enemy, originated in Britain. In terms of the attitudes it conveyed it became a crucial catalyst for the bands that were to form in the wake of The Enemy. It is therefore important to understand what those attitudes were. The impulse in punk rock, as it developed in Britain, was to close the gap between musician and listener, between producer and consumer. The ideology, such as it existed, had its starting points in the Situationist celebration of the worthless, banal and trivial. It wanted to reclaim music from the grip of multi - national record companies, to move it from the recording studio back to the live venue. Punk stressed the need for direct self expression not hindered by traditional standards of musical expression. A do-it-yourself ethic was created, supported by a belief in the purity of this form of self-expression.⁷ Under the label of punk, fans could become musicians. With a limited number of chords these fans created

⁶ *Rip It Up*, December 1977, p.15. A subsequent performance at Otago University was less well received, being stopped by the organizers after only seven songs.

⁷ D. Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, Milton Keynes, 1985 p.26

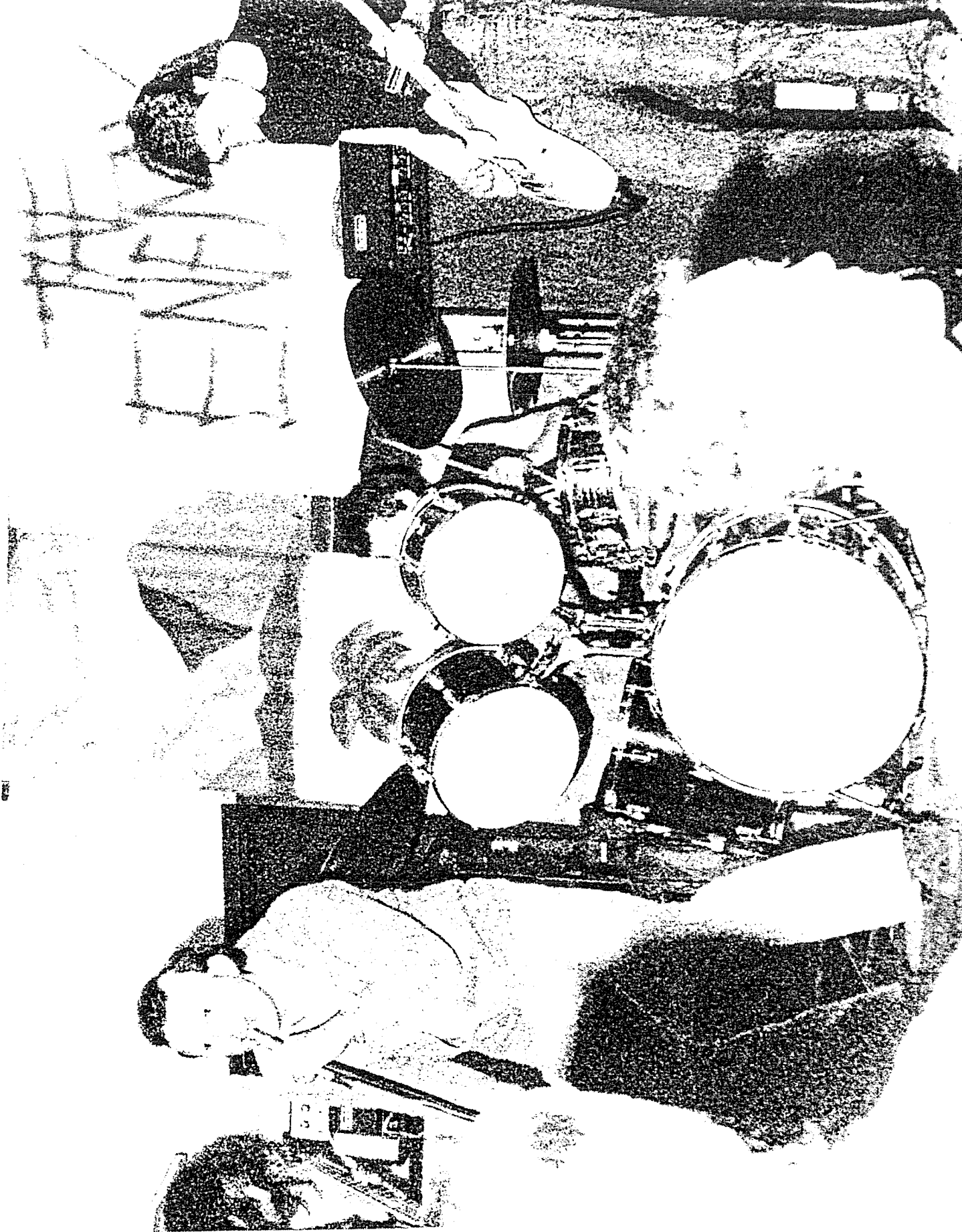


Fig 1. The Enemy, Beneficiaries Hall, 1978 (L to R) Mick Dawson, Chris Knox,
Mike Dooley, Alec Bathgate.



Fig 2: Members of the Audience, Beneficaries Hall, 1978.

music which emphasised directness and repetition at the expense of technical virtuosity; music which expressed anger in the monotonous screeching of guitars and the merciless flogging of drums.

Punk , in an attack mounted on ideas of artifice, exaggeration and outrage, again challenged, what it considered to be, the unnecessary complexities of existing music . In the image projected by the audience as well as the music they made, confrontation became important. Punks in Britain sought a visual shock effect :

They stood there dressed up in the discarded fashion of previous decades, in pieces of uniform and ladies' underwear cut into rags and held together with safety pins, with their hair dyed green, red or purple, hung about with razor blades, bicycle chains and toilet chains, wearing iron studded dog collars around their necks, out-sized safety pins through their cheeks and multi-coloured make-up on their faces. . .⁸

Simon Frith's analysis of punk clearly spells out what attracted Knox to the music. He argued that punk rock is "about making the best of a bad situation; it is not about changing it."⁹ Wicke elaborated on this point, emphasising that punk owed its structure not to a new social realism but to the cultural activities of its fans.¹⁰ Punk came to be used in different ways by its varied audiences.

The influence punk had in Dunedin becomes apparent when the music it inspired is examined.¹¹ It was not so much punk as very fast music. As Colbert said The Enemy were *real* punk. The label 'punk' had been in currency amongst serious music fans since the middle of the

⁸ P, Wicke, *Rock Music*, p.136.

⁹ quoted in *ibid*, p.147.

¹⁰ *ibid* p.147. Wicke defines this context- "as background and framework for their gatherings every evening, as live dance music, as compensation for boredom, as an element of confrontation in the cultural context they have developed, as an opportunity to do something once music was no longer linked to particular technological or musical constraints."

¹¹ There was one other punk band in Dunedin at this time - London SS - who only played covers of other bands' songs.

1960s. It had been largely applied to American bands, for example, the Velvet Underground, the MC5, Iggy Pop and the Stooges, and the New York Dolls. Knox, Colbert and friends, aged in their mid - twenties, had largely formed their musical tastes before punk happened. They were able to see the precursors of the 1976/7 British bands as illustrated in Knox's association of the energy of the Sex Pistols with that of Iggy Pop.

Punk, in Dunedin, more importantly gave birth to an attitude rather than a musical form - the idea of making music yourself. Previously music had just been bought and consumed, the Sex Pistols and the subsequent musical outburst of 1977 caused people such as Knox to actively think about making music. As such they were into punk without being punks. Unlike their British counterparts they were not fashion punks:

In Dunedin there were people who were just into ripping their clothes. But no punk haircuts and only a couple of art students who put safety pins through their cheeks on special occasions.¹²

There were about 50 'punks' in Dunedin. They tended to adopt the look which came to be associated with American punk band The Ramones: dirty jeans with holes, dirty sneakers, and an old suitcoat.

This was in stark contrast to Auckland, as The Enemy discovered when they moved there in 1978. Lured to Auckland by the great punk bands they had read about in *Rip It Up* and the frustration of living in Dunedin, their disappointment could not even be alleviated by the 17 dozen bottles of local Speights beer they had taken with them. Knox found the punks in Auckland so copycat as to be off putting, as he did the violence they instigated.¹³ The Auckland punk bands, which formed and broke up with great regularity, generally played the songs of their British heroes. They looked like and tried to speak like them, as well as having a similar penchant for pseudonyms. Plain Chris Knox et

¹² Knox, op cit.

¹³ *ibid.*

al were up against Johnny Volume, Sally Slag, Des Truction, Cher Apathy and Justin Sane. The members of The Enemy quickly decided these musicians and their bands did not have the life and energy they had. Punk in Auckland was based around Zwines, a venue run by punks for punks. To the Dunedinites it was a violent place full of "really heavy fucked up people". At The Enemy's first Auckland performance, which was at the University, a man was paralysed after being thrown off the balcony.¹⁴ The first review of The Enemy in Auckland was mixed. It is significant that the only real praise came for the most obviously punk aspect of their show; the performance of Knox on vocals.¹⁵ By the end of 1978, Mick Dawson had returned to Dunedin. The three remaining members of The Enemy recruited two more musicians and in January 1979 formed a new band, Toy Love.

The different effect punk had on Dunedin and Auckland is important in highlighting distinctions between the cities, which have in turn contributed to the differing types of music written in them. Auckland's typified that city's acceptance of fashion trends. An almost cosmopolitan city, it is very nebulous in its nature and identity. Dunedin's position at the bottom of New Zealand and hence the world provided a different perspective, and if one accepts the argument that the collective psyche of a place shapes its inhabitants, it gave people who live there a different perspective.¹⁶ In the case of Dunedin it is a more

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *Rip It Up*, October 1978. p.16.

¹⁶ interview with Hamish Kilgour, 5/2/91. Kilgour, a member of The Clean, argues that Dunedin has a more homogeneous environment than a city like Christchurch. The former is a small enclosed city with a main street and a university connected to it. The latter is flatter and more fragmented. Dunedin, with its Scottish heritage, tends towards the more easy going, the more gregarious. The English influence of Christchurch's founders is reflected in the city's up-tight nature. Although isolated from influences Dunedin is not closed off from them. Kilgour also believes the nature of the city with its limited number of distractions, tends to produce single minded people.

Dunedin's climate is also an important difference between it and the country's other main centres. The wet and cold Dunedin winters resulted in considerable time being spent indoors.

cynical attitude to new ideas and fashions.¹⁷

Dunedin's isolation was important in allowing the formation of Mother Goose in the 1970s. They were an offbeat band which confounded audiences by appearing dressed as Mickey Mouse, bumblebees and ballerinas and in so doing achieved limited commercial success in both New Zealand and Australia. Although not part of the music community which is the focus of this study, they provide an example of how living in Dunedin enabled a band to have a different perspective on fashion:

When we started Mother Goose we tried to be the antithesis of fashion. . . .In Dunedin that choice is made more clearcut because you are out of the mainstream of New Zealand, and New Zealand is certainly out of the mainstream of the world. So you can look at it more objectively, and say I'm going to go fashion or I'm going to go loony.¹⁸

Dunedin's isolation played an important role in the development of alternative music in the city. The feeling of isolation allowed musicians to develop at a very slow pace. They took their own time sorting out exactly what they wanted to do. As Hamish Kilgour, who has lived in Auckland, remarked:

In Dunedin you can start and be terrible. You can be absolutely shocking and get away with it and get better.

The musicians therefore had a lot of time to stay inside to write songs and learn the versatility of their instruments.

¹⁷ interview with David Eggleton, 7/8/90. The poet, David Eggleton, believes Dunedin, because of its strong sense of identity is as a city, able to assess new trends. This identity stems from the preservation of the past and the institutions the city has for constantly examining itself, for reflecting on its heritage.

¹⁸ Steve Young interviewed in "Dunedin 1982", *Radio With Pictures* (broadcast 1982). In the same programme Roy Colbert argued there is a parallel between Mother Goose and The Enemy despite the total dissimilarity of their respective music. Both bands he believed had the idea of being as good as possible - the idea of being an important band.

Listener, 20/11/82, p.96. When producer Simon Morris was in Dunedin making the above programme he was reported as being aghast at the city's indifference to trends and all things new - "I can't believe this place. . . all the girls have got long hair."

The biggest problem in Auckland is that it is such a trendy place. They get a bit lost jumping from one trend to the next without thinking about what they're actually doing.¹⁹

Living in Dunedin gave the musicians the opportunity to get a larger perspective on music. They could look at the previous twenty-five years of rock 'n' roll and make a choice to suit themselves. In comparison a city like Auckland produced a pressure for the latest sound from Britain or America.²⁰ The isolation and the relatively small size of Dunedin's population meant the biggest influence for a lot of bands has been the other bands in the city.

In this regard The Enemy's influence cannot be underestimated. First, they showed that in Dunedin as well as Britain a fan could become a band member. The second aspect of their influence was even more important for the subsequent development of music in Dunedin. In 1982, music writer, Roy Colbert, explained this effect:

... but they also had so many good songs and they were quite simple songs. So the young kids watching The Enemy liked the songs but they could also see how they could write those sort of songs themselves.²¹

This contrasted with Auckland where the punk bands were largely covers bands, or so derivative of overseas bands that they may as well have been.

In the wake of The Enemy and punk, three bands formed which comprised the first wave of this lineage of alternative music in Dunedin: The Clean, The Same and Bored Games. The Clean were Knox's friend, 21 year old Hamish Kilgour, Kilgour's 17 year old brother David, and David's school friend Peter Gutteridge. Despite having no musical training they were persuaded to support The Enemy after only two practices. The result was shambolic.

¹⁹ *Rip It Up*, March 1982, p.15.

²⁰ *Critic*, 14/6/82.

²¹ 'Dunedin 1982', *Radio With Pictures*, 1982.

We were probably more influenced by the Velvet Underground at that stage. . . the music was sort of weird, what we thought was Velvet Underground but was just thrash really and every now and then Peter would get up and scream a few lines into the mike. We didn't have any lyrics sorted out. About half an hour before we went on we said to Peter, well you've been designated to go up and say something every now and then.²²

The audience reaction was very much a product of the time. Things were exciting because people were doing something different. As a result a very supportive environment existed. After this performance The Clean began to practice intensively so they would be capable of playing the music they had written - they even wrote some lyrics. Subsequently Knox's friend Doug Hood, joined The Clean on vocals.

There were few places to play other than Beneficiaries Hall and The Enemy's practice room in Dowling Street. In September 1978 The Enemy left for Auckland, taking Doug Hood as their manager and soundman. As the focus of alternative music in Dunedin, The Enemy also took the life of the local music scene with them. Disillusioned with Dunedin, The Clean followed their compatriots north the following May, leaving Gutteridge and his limited skills behind. The Clean played a handful of times in Auckland with temporary bassists, but dissolved before the end of the year.

Before The Enemy left Dunedin, 15 year old Martin Phillipps saw them twice. Inspired by those two performances and the possibilities punk had opened up for music he and his friends, Craig Easton, Jeff Batts and Paul Baird formed The Same. Phillipps had always been attracted to a more rebellious lifestyle. James Dean had been an idol, then Jack Kerouac, and with the latter a failed attempt to become a jazz fan. A perennial dreamer, who until he was 13 believed he was going to be 'zapped' away by a UFO, Phillipps desperately wanted to avoid the 9

²² interview with David Kilgour, 16/8/91.

to 5 rut. With the arrival of punk, music presented the opportunity for a different lifestyle.²³

School work took a backseat after Labour weekend 1978 and the formation of The Same, and in fact by the middle of 1979 Phillipps had left Logan Park High School. With three originals in a set of seven songs, The Same made their debut in April 1979, with a shambolic performance at Beneficiaries Hall supporting The Clean before the latter went to Auckland.²⁴ This show made them aware of their limited musicianship. Before the end of the year, after a number of lineup changes, they had played at 7am on Telethon, played a Talent Quest and supported Toy Love (the reincarnated Enemy) who played at The Cook as aprt of a national tour. The latter came after Phillipps, in his school uniform, had turned up at the Cook bandhouse and asked Knox if they could play. Previously he and his under - age friends had set up deckchairs outside the pub to listen to their heroes. By this stage Jeff Batts had written the infamous "Thalidomide Baby", a Same song about 'a lass who was fantastic despite the fact her arms and legs were made of plastic'.

The Same had also played with Bored Games at Coronation Hall. Bored Games were based around the nucleus of Kaikorai Valley High School pupils, Shayne Carter, Wayne Elsey and Jeff Harford. Arguably the most punk band to come out of Dunedin in this period, Bored Games played 24 times in the course of their eighteen month existence. The more direct influence of punk is probably accounted for by the age of the band and the working - class suburb of Brockville in which they lived. Compared to 25 year old Chris Knox, Shayne Carter was 14 years old when he saw the Sex Pistols on television in 1978.²⁵ Inspired by

²³ interview with Martin Phillipps, 3/12/90.

²⁴ ibid. The set list was, '1979', 'Waiting For My Girl', 'Art School' (all originals), 'I Wanna Be Your Dog', 'Wild Thing' and 'Louie Louie'.

²⁵ interview with Shayne Carter, 31/1/91. "The Sex Pistols were so basic yet there was a real sense of menace. They were incredibly powerful and rebellious as well. All the

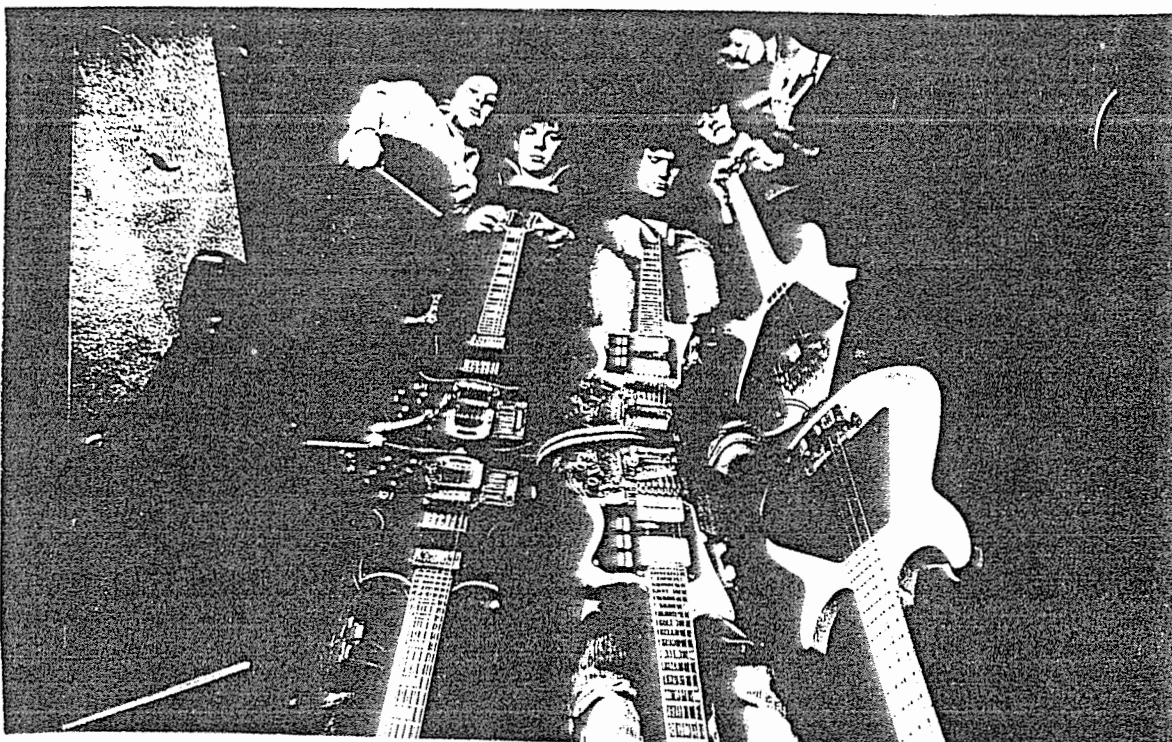


Fig. 3.(Top) The Same, 1980. (l to r) Paul Baird, Martin Phillipps, Craig Easton,
Jane Dodd, Rachel Phillipps.

Fig 4. Bored Games, 1980. (l to r). Shayne Carter, Jeff Harford, Wayne Elsey.

elements of rock 'n' roll were there. We couldn't define it as such when we were hit by the impact, but we were still hit by the impact."

them he wrote two songs on what were in the process of becoming cliched punk themes - "Rich Bitch", about Queen Elizabeth II, and the self-explanatory "Mentally Derranged".²⁶ The latter was performed later in the year at a Fourth Form school camp. Carter vomited Weet-Bix and toothpaste while the rest of the 'band' played mock instruments and threw sausages at the audience.²⁷

Such was the success of this that it was decided to do it again, this time with proper instruments. After failing to find a guitarist amongst their friends, Bored Games advertised in the *Otago Daily Times* in June 1979. Fifteen year old Jonathan Moore and his neighbour, Fraser Batts (younger brother of The Same's Jeff Batts), answered this advertisement. By January 1981 they could boast a large set of songs ; 80% of them were originals. Carter wrote most of the songs. His lyrics reflected his teenage fascinations, notably television character 'Joe 90' and Marilyn Monroe. Bored Games made no claim to be anything but a punk band; their most obvious influence was English band The Buzzcocks.

A debate in the letter column's of *Mercury*, the Kaikorai Valley High School newspaper, revealed Carter totally caught up in the idea of punk rock.²⁸ Carter took punk on board most obviously in his stage

²⁶ *ibid.* 'Mentally Deranged' contained the following lines- "Today's public are a bore/thinking it's like the second world war/We're the good guys/They're the crauts/Forever trying to kick us out/the mentally deranged" etc.

Rip It Up, April, 1984, p.22 "I learnt how to write songs in Bored Games. I just picked up this old guitar with two strings, tuned those strings into sort of a chord and wrote songs like that."

²⁷ Shayne Carter, *op cit.*

²⁸ *Mercury*, February 1980, Bored Games Scrapbook (Shayne Carter).

"Personally I think if any of these critizers (sic) tried even dressing punk they'd be scared of becoming outcasts from the stereo-type adolescents or 'young adult' or more bluntly being beaten up.

"So instead of this life-style destroying threat they remain stereo-type and in line with the masses: long hair or trendy disco style cut, ski jackets, flares, expensive sport shoes, motor bikes, drinking beer (and comparing the amount they can put down) and fighting to

image, a cross between Johnny Rotten and Chris Knox, complete with an arrogant stage manner which some people found aggravating.²⁹ Although Carter had never seen The Enemy, he was very much aware of their existence; The Enemy's 'Pull Down The Shades' was part of Bored Games' set. When Bored Games supported Toy Love (who still played the song), they not only performed it, but Carter introduced it as "a song I wrote yesterday". Bored Games' youth was a constant point of discussion whenever the band was discussed. This ageism annoyed Carter (and the band), as did comparisons to Knox. He often threw these comparisons back at the audience. When they supported Toy Love Carter's first comments to the crowd were -"Welcome to the Christian fellowship meeting. . . Hello we're the naive and juvenile Bored Games, and it's time for Chris Knox impersonations."³⁰

By the middle of 1979 the members of The Same and Bored Games had become friends. Most of them attended either Logan Park High School or Kaikorai Valley High School, the nucleus for the two groups, but other people attached themselves to the scene.³¹ There was no rivalry between the two bands, more a sense of relief at finding some like-minded people. At their age they faced a lot of peer group pressure: it was not the 'in' thing to make music, especially "that punk noise". For Carter and his friends, having grown up in Brockville made the northern suburb of Opoho seem miles away, so for them it was like finding an exotic group of people from another city.³² The Same came from a much more middle - class environment than that of the 'Brockville Boys', something Carter noticed when he visited them.³³ In

generally show off their limited strength...

"... but nobody apart from a few exceptions attempted to look past the music and look more at the actions and motivations of the group. We weren't really there to give a pleasant musical interlude but to provoke a response; good or bad."

²⁹ *Mercury*, March 1980, Bored Games Scrapbook (Shayne Carter).

³⁰ Tape of 24/8/80 at the Concert Chambers. (personal collection).

³¹ For a full list of who attended what Dunedin secondary school see Appendix 1.

³² Shayne Carter op cit.

fact, when The Same were thinking of a band name someone suggested 'Two Car Family'. Rachel Phillipps remembers joking with Shayne Carter and Wayne Elsey about coming from Brockville. Elsey would reply that his family's house was below a certain line and that in fact he lived in Kaikorai.³⁴ There was no parental pressure to give up music. Parents, though bemused were not unsupportive. Most, it seemed, thought it was a phase that their children would grow out of.

United by a love of the music the developing scene's membership crossed class and gender divisions. As Roy Shuker discovered unlike overseas trends, New Zealand youth's sense of peer group identification based on shared musical preferences cuts across class categories.³⁵ Shuker found that, "New Zealand youth tend to accept the dominant ethos of liberal egalitarianism, in a society where class as a dividing factor has in the popular view at least, been muted."³⁶ In terms of gender, the traditional male dominance of rock music is reflected in the membership of these bands, although as the scene progressed more women did become actively involved. The members of the scene, however, differed in their commitment to music. This difference continued throughout its existence. At this embryonic stage it was most apparent in the attitude to punk. Punk made Martin Phillipps aware of the social possibilities of music, and thus he became conscious of the potential music offered to him:

For me it [the music] wasn't intentionally fast. That's just the way things were at the time. It was always raw and exciting, but right from the start I was trying to improve things. Looking back I really regret that. It was a golden period and I should have left things as they were. I

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ i) interview with Rachel Phillipps 22/7/91.

³⁵ R. Shuker, 'Youth Culture. . .', p.114. Interestingly the comments of Phillipps and Carter are the only ones made by interviewees relating to any sense of class awareness. All the interviewees were asked about this aspect of the music community.

³⁶ R. Shuker, 'Adolescents and Popular Music', *SITES*, 21 (1990), p.93.

started pushing the potential of the songs too early and made a real band thing of it.³⁷

Bored Games, by contrast, took on more of a deliberate punk stance. They did not think in terms of working on their songs to the same extent as Phillipps, they were punks after all ! Five years later, Wayne Elsey's attitude to Bored Games had become cynical:

We were all about 14. walking around with snot dripping out of our noses, spitting at people and getting beaten up and thrown around because we were all really small and wimpy.³⁸

The social scene that centered on these two groups of people can be fitted into Mike Brake's taxonomy of youth subcultures. Brake isolated 'cultural rebellion' as a largely middle - class phenomenon which therefore tends to be more diffuse and more conscious of an international cultural influence.³⁹ In the case of alternative music in Dunedin punk fulfilled the role of international cultural influence.⁴⁰ Brake suggested that a dominant feature of youth culture is the seeking of an identity outside the accepted occupational role or family. He argues that "a major attraction of [youth] subculture is its rebellion, its hedonism and its alternatives to the restrictions of home, school, and

³⁷ *Garage* 6. p.6 . Also see note 40.

³⁸ *Rip It Up*, April, 1984, p.22

³⁹ Brake, op cit, p.4, p.24 & p.86. Shuker, 'Adolescents . . .' op cit . Shuker quotes an English and Canadian study of the listening habits of teenagers. Both show that middle-class teenagers have a greater tendency to reject mainstream pop music for more underground, alternative styles of rock music. The relevance of this to New Zealand is questionable, as Shuker's own findings discussed in footnotes 35 & 36 show.

⁴⁰ *Alternative Press*, 1990, Flying Nun Press Files. According to Martin Phillipps people were aware of being part of an international movement. " There really was a movement then, it was like a third wave of rebellious rock. . .It made all the papers, it changed fashion, it changed music, you really thought you were part of something that in its own little way was going to change the world. You couldn't have a better situation to be in. . . If you're 14 or 15 now you just wouldn't be aware of the social possibilities of music and what it can actually really do."

work - it is fun."⁴¹ This 'cultural rebellion' does not, however, reach an articulated opposition.⁴² Frith also discussed the role of music within this framework:

In this context, youth cultures, peer groups, are the setting. . . for an escape from the the [class] struggle, for irresponsibility, self indulgence, fantasy. Music is a source of both an emotionally intensified sense of self (as artists are heard to articulate their listeners' own private fears and feelings) and collective excitement, an illicit, immediate sense of solidarity and danger. . .⁴³

In this context music was used by this group of Dunedin teenagers to create an independent leisure environment.⁴⁴ While their contemporaries played sport or fixed cars, they made music. Friends were roped in to complete a band. Band practices provided a setting for the scene. The Same's practice room, next door to the Zoology building in Great King Street, was a favourite location for drunken gatherings. Although younger than the members of the re - formed Clean, that band's practice room in their London Street flat was also frequently attended. Governor's coffee shop was a regular gathering place as well.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Brake, op cit, p.165

⁴² ibid p.159

⁴³ S. Frith, " 'The magic that can set you free': The ideology of folk and the myth of the rock community', *Popular Music* 1, 1981. p.167.

⁴⁴ Wicke, op cit, (1990), p.65. Wicke makes this point in reference to teenagers in Liverpool in the early 1960s. In this situation however the bands had to play in clubs run by other people, therefore the music they played was dictated by the owners. This community organized their own venues as will be discussed in chapter three.

⁴⁵ There was one other band of their age in Dunedin, Static. Whether it was because they came from a different suburb, Maori Hill or that they attended Otago Boys' High School or that a member's father was the Batt's old minister is unclear, but whatever the reasons there was 'war' between Static, and Bored Games in particular. A more important reason for such dislike was probably that Static only played covers. There was a large number of cover's bands in Dunedin. The Dunedin Rumours column in *Rip It Up*, dutifully recorded all the line-up and name changes, only gradually acknowledging the likes of Bored Games and The Same. These bands who tried "to look young when they're about 45 years old", were treated with total disdain by the young musicians.



Fig 5. The Clean, 1980. (L to R) Robert Scott, David Kilgour, Hamish Kilgour.

It was the re - formed Clean which provided motivation for the second wave of bands. Hamish Kilgour returned from Auckland in April 1980 on the recommendation of his brother, who had met Robert Scott when they both attended Art School in 1979. Scott had grown up in Mosgiel and in 1978 formed a garage band, Electric Blood, with his younger brother and family friends. As Mosgiel's 'lone punk' he had regularly come into Dunedin in the course of that year to see The Enemy and The Clean. By 1980 Scott had moved to Dunedin and, flatting with Kilgour's girlfriend, had begun playing with David Kilgour ; Scott on bass and Kilgour on guitar.⁴⁶ When Hamish returned The Clean began playing again. Despite a shortage of venues and few other bands with a similar philosophy, their limited number of performances were much more coherent than The Clean circa 1979. The Clean had improved to such an extent that teenagers, such as Phillipps, who had glimpsed the end wave of The Enemy finally had their own band to revere. Quite simply The Clean could be as good as you wanted them to be. The fact that they were perceived to be 'great' just made it that much easier. In 1980 inspired by the no frills sound of the three-piece Clean, The Chills, The Stones and The Verlaines formed. The new bands to varying degrees borrowed David Kilgour's guitar sound ; a 'spiky' rhythm guitar with a reverberated treble sound.

These three bands were a product of the metamorphosis of the first wave of bands. The Same dissolved. In October 1980, Martin Phillipps' formed another band, The Chills, a result of Phillipps 'jamming' with original Clean bassist, Peter Gutteridge, and drummer, Alan Haig. Former Same members Jane Dodd, and Phillipps' younger sister Rachel, completed the line-up. Although not as influenced by Kilgour's guitar as the other groups, the influence of what Phillipps still believes to be one of the best bands he's ever heard, was there.⁴⁷ The Chills' first

⁴⁶ interview with Robert Scott 7/6/91.

⁴⁷ Martin Phillipps op cit.

performed in public in December 1980. When Jane Dodd returned to Britain in May 1981 The Chills temporarily disbanded. Phillipps and Haig re-formed the band later in the year. In this lineup they were joined by two ex-members of Bored Games, Fraser Batts and Terry Moore.

Tired of having nowhere to play Bored Games had broken up in May 1981. Terry Moore (no relation to Jonathan) had joined Bored Games a year earlier after original member Wayne Elsey had left. Elsey left Bored Games in the winter of 1980 to form a band more like The Clean. The result was The Stones, a three piece which also included The Same's original vocalist, Jeff Batts. They soon declared their ambition to have The Clean support them.

Graeme Downes formed The Verlaines in 1980, after seeing The Clean and The Same during his final year at Logan Park High School in 1979. The Verlaines included Downes' friend, original Same member Craig Easton. Prior to this Downes had been mainly interested in classical music, playing the oboe in school and youth orchestras. The Clean were the first live rock 'n' roll band Downes had heard. Like Phillipps he still considers them the most exciting live band he has ever seen. The Verlaines and The Stones had their first public performance at Otago University on 25 April 1981 in a 'gig' which also featured The Chills, Bored Games and another young band Requiem Paradise.⁴⁸

In Dunedin a 'music community' had come into existence and the process of mutual discovery its members went through had a crucial influence on the music the community produced.⁴⁹ No distinction of

⁴⁸ The Stones had previously played at a party in December 1980, and The Verlaines had played to a select audience in their practice rooms a month earlier.

⁴⁹ S. Frith, 'The magic that can set you free', op cit, p.166, p.159, & Wicke, *Rock Music*, op cit, p.88. The notion of a 'rock community' or 'music community' was initially raised in the 1960s by American music magazine *Rolling Stone*, when Jon Landau argued the difference between rock music and pop music was rock's status as a folk music. This rock-folk argument focussed on aesthetics: the folk experience was 'authentic' rooted in the experience of creation, audience and performers shared the same social experience; the pop experience



Fig 6. The Stones 1982. (L to R) Jeff Batts, Graeme Anderson, Wayne Elsey.

was unauthentic, as it involved only the act of consumption. Frith discussing that rock music which is "produced for the simultaneous consumption of a large youthful market", dismisses this idea in reference to an institution, to a set of people. He argues instead for the idea of a rock community as a sensation produced by the music. Within these boundaries, Frith's conclusion (one also supported by Wicke) is valid. However when one looks outside this narrow definition of rock the argument loses all validity.



Fig 7. The Verlaines 1982. (L to R) Gregg Kerr, Graeme Downes, Jane Dodd.

social experience existed between performers and audience. The violence which occurred at performances resulted in the solidifying of the community as a distinct social group. Originally the Old Beneficiaries Hall, located in the central city and then Coronation Hall in Maori Hill, provided venues. The performances at these venues were invariably accompanied by violence of some description. The perceived seriousness of this violence depended on the age of those who were there. The more socially experienced the observer, the less the perceived danger. Chris Knox remembered more violence at parties than at the Beneficiaries Hall. That which did occur was more along the lines of playfighting -"the way boys manage to get into each others arms without being called queer"⁵⁰ -when surfies or the 'V8 Boys' turned up. Similarly, David Kilgour recalled any violence inside Coronation Hall as largely teenage mayhem and drunkenness.⁵¹ On one occasion, such 'mayhem' caused \$2 500 worth of damage.⁵²

The majority of the community were younger than Knox and Kilgour. Going to see bands was their first social experience of the world outside of the confines of parental supervision. These people therefore remember the dances as a very violent time. Apart from the young musicians a cross section of people attended the dances. The presence of some of these people created the need for tactics to watch the bands in safety:

You kept one eye on the music and one eye on other people and one eye on the people circling the room to make sure you didn't react badly when they dug an elbow into your ribcage as they walked by.⁵³

Other people remember knives being thrown, a person walking around

⁵⁰ Chris Knox, op cit.

⁵¹ David Kilgour, op cit.

⁵² The Clean Scrapbook, (David Kilgour). This was on the 10/5/80. The 'diary' entry mentions nothing else apart from the fact 400 people attended the dance, and the three bands made \$100 each.

⁵³ interview with Graeme Downes 12/6/91.



Fig 8. Poster, 1980.

with a motor bike kick start peddle and stuffing being pulled from seats and then set alight.⁵⁴ The worst problems, however, occurred outside Coronation Hall. The 'V8 Boys' (or bodgies) regularly waited outside for people at the end of the night:

There was this real sort of red-neck sort of violent thing in Dunedin for a while, a phase the bodgies went through. they went out rock-hunting, searching for punk-rockers and really severely beating them up. You'd go to to these concerts and see The Enemy or The Clean, but you'd be very careful going home. You'd walk out, there'd be a streetful of them in their cars waiting. You'd take back streets home and hide behind a hedge if you heard a low rumbling noise.⁵⁵

On one occasion Bored Games, after they had finished playing , waited inside Coronation Hall for over an hour before they considered it was safe to leave.⁵⁶

The violence implied that their activities worried other people. There were vague parallels to the violence of the English Punk movement, thereby intensifying the feeling of association with an international movement. It all helped to create an exciting atmosphere:

Just being young and being in a band is exciting. It's neat to break out of home and school and then to have punk rock music at the same time is doubly exciting.⁵⁷

The sense of community was futher enhanced by the feeling of championing a cause. In 1979/80 former members of The Enemy were in Toy Love, a band which was attempting to succeed within the New

⁵⁴ Rachel Phillipps, op cit, and interview with Alastair Galbraith 11/6/91.

⁵⁵ *Alternative Press*, op cit.

⁵⁶ Shayne Carter, op cit.

Otago Daily Times, 8/8/80. In August 1980, a disturbance outside a dance was attended by the police. The *Otago Daily Times* reported that "an extremely big gathering" of under 16 year olds outside the hall had smashed street lights, a pedestrian crossing light and a telephone box, while "an orderly and well controlled teenage dance was taking place inside the hall".

⁵⁷ *ibid*.

Zealand record industry on its own terms: "It was like a real pride thing being part of the crowd with Toy Love, that whole sort of family thing. At the time it was really exciting."⁵⁸ With their unique, non-commercial music Toy Love experienced some success in 1980. It was not without some cost, however, and by the end of the year they had split up, disillusioned by their experiences within the music industry.⁵⁹

This family atmosphere continued on into the 1980s. After Toy Love broke up The Clean's chart success provided a similar sense of pride. In attempting to describe the situation to the overseas press, the musicians tended towards the romantic and Dunedin came across as an "idyllic bohemian community".⁶⁰ They were, however, simply a group of friends, and as friends do, they helped each other out. Equipment was continually being loaned. Bored Games had always borrowed gear. Third wave bands such as Look Blue Go Purple and The Rip owned little gear until they had been together two or three years. There was an attitude of everyone doing the one thing, rather than people doing their own thing:

We were all trying to do something - just trying to make our music and have someone hear it and have a forum for it. The idea was let's all work together and play together. That's what made 1981 a good year and it spilled over into ensuing years.⁶¹

1981 was an important year. On a positive note on 14 - 15 August The Clean and The Verlaines became the first bands to play at the Empire Tavern, in Princes Street. The year ended negatively, however, when The Clean moved to Christchurch. The reasons for leaving Dunedin are unclear. 1981 in Dunedin had been a great year and the

⁵⁸ *Rip It Up*, December 1987, p.23

⁵⁹ Toy Love's self titled album spent seven weeks on the New Zealand album charts and reached number four.

⁶⁰ RAM, 10/8/88, Flying Nun Press Files.

⁶¹ Hamish Kilgour, op cit.

Clean's members felt it was time for a change. They had always been critical of the conservatism and lack of support of Dunedin audiences, finding the enthusiasm of Christchurch audiences more appealing. Christchurch was also home to Roger Shepherd and his recently formed record label, Flying Nun. Another possible reason was that the Kilgours' mother had recently shifted to Christchurch.⁶² The departure of The Clean might have destroyed the scene, but the new venue sufficiently compensated.

The Empire provided a venue that was in a sense the community's own. A small second - floor bar, it was never overt enough to attract much attention from the police or, more importantly, troublemakers from other groups such as 'surfies' or the city's 'bodgies'. It became the extent of bands horizons. Until those horizons shifted it was 'Nirvana'. As such 1981 is remembered as a great year despite The Clean's departure. The Empire had a party - like atmosphere, especially when full. The stage was the smallest possible area that you could fit a band on, and when 200 people filled a venue which fire regulations stated had a capacity of 100, the crowd ended up pushing up on the band as they tried to play. Even when an audience of only ten or twenty people turned up the small size of the Empire made it seem as if there was a much larger crowd.

The audiences, whatever their size, were supportive. Having largely grown up with the bands they gave them the benefit of the doubt even if things sounded awful:

Dunedin audiences generally pick out something in a band that they might think is good and they will stick with them - they'll just wait; whereas in other centres when you play for the first time you've got to impress and you've got to have the lights, and the songs have got to be really tight, or you're just not going to make it at all.⁶³

⁶² Hamish Kilgour, op cit, Robert Scott, op cit, David Kilgour op cit.

⁶³ Jeff Harford quoted in the *Midweek*, 19/12/84, p.11.



Fig 9: Poster, 1981.

⁶³ Jeff Harford quoted in the *Midweek*, 19/12/84, p.11.

In most places bands play live in an attempt to gain a record label's attention, either through the presence of a label's representative or to gain large enough crowds to get the attention of a label. Although they believed they were good enough to release a record, the idea of 'making it' in the record industry did not concern these bands. Until 1983, with the exception of The Clean, these Dunedin bands did not believe there was any opportunity to 'make it'. Although this is largely true for New Zealand bands as a whole, Dunedin's distance from Auckland, the home of what constituted the New Zealand record industry, accentuated the situation even more.

Playing live gave bands the opportunity to play new songs, not to win an audience so they could move on. Thoughts concentrated on the moment. In this respect there was no real competition in the scene. Competition only existed in the sense that if someone did something good, others wanted to do something as good if not better. Bands inspired each other. The Empire became a focus for a considerable amount of activity, a forum for ideas and creativity, a stimulating and encouraging atmosphere created by people making original music for their contemporaries.

A supportive band network had definitely developed when Alastair Galbraith and Robbie Muir formed The Rip in late 1981. Fifteen year old Galbraith first saw The Clean in 1981 at a dance at Moreau College with his school friend, Robbie Muir, and like others before them, they were inspired to form a band. The music filled Galbraith's head in a way that music he had heard elsewhere had not and The Clean made him "realize you could look ugly and still play music. You could dribble at the same time - definite inspiration."⁶⁴ Vowing to see the band every time it played he collected what little was written on the band to stick to his bedroom wall. A few months later, after buying a cheap guitar and practice amplifier, The Rip -

⁶⁴ *Christchurch Star*, 1984, Flying Nun Press Files.

Galbraith, Muir and drummer Matthew Ransom - arranged to play one song at The Empire. Ransom did not turn up, and a drummer was recruited from the audience. They eventually gave up before the end of the song after Galbraith broke two guitar strings. After this 'performance' Kathryn Tyrie came up and asked if they wanted to support her band, Sneaky Feelings, next time they played. At that performance Wayne Elsey saw The Rip, told Galbraith he thought they were brilliant, offered him use of The Stones' practice room and told of the whereabouts of a cheap bass guitar.⁶⁵

Not all new bands got total support. Young bands such as Gammaunche and the Blue Meanies, who formed at the same time as The Rip remained on the periphery of the community. The most notable victim of this ostracism was Sneaky Feelings, a band from the same age group as the others which unlike the former two, would eventually record with Flying Nun. Formed in the middle of 1980 around the song-writing skills of former Otago Boys' High pupils, Matthew Bannister and David Pine, the band always found itself on the periphery. Although Sneaky Feelings started in the aftermath of punk they were not influenced by it. They drew their influences very directly from 1960s American bands like The Byrds. They aimed for "a bright sort of 60's sound with the emphasis on melody and beat."⁶⁶ Subsequently they did not quite fit into the mould of the other bands. Their music lacked the drive or energy of bands like The Clean or The Stones. Prior to their first performance in December 1980 they had no direct connection to the Enemy-spawned Dunedin music scene. After that it was like, ". . . breaking into a cosy little scene. We got the big freeze out."⁶⁷ The fact that, apart from David Pine, all the band attended university and were largely socially inept also contributed to

⁶⁵ Alastair Galbraith, op cit

⁶⁶ *Christchurch Star*, Flying Nun Press File.

⁶⁷ Martin Durrant, quoted in *Critic*, 14/6/82.

their ostracization, as did a tendency for cliquism on the part of the established scene.

Sneaky Feelings remained on the periphery of the community. Their appearance at the end of 1980 intensified the cohesion of the scene although, within it, band lineups remained fluid. Graeme Downes was never sure The Verlaines would last more than six months. People moved away or moved to another band. This constant state of flux has led to the scene being labelled incestuous.⁶⁸ As the first half of the decade progressed access to equipment and venues seemed to become easier for the musicians within this community. Although a band scene still existed it was part of a larger music scene: making music was what was important. People could be in more than one band at a time.⁶⁹

The nature of the scene is typified by Peter Gutteridge's approach to playing his music. He had countless bands who played one-off performances, forming and disintegrating as he planned. They came about either when he had a set of songs ready to perform and would get a group of musicians together, or when he 'jammed' with friends and they wrote songs.⁷⁰ It was a case of just finding places and playing. Apart from pubs there were drunken parties in empty warehouses or large flats. These would either have bands playing or gear there for people to play on. Weekend evenings would often be spent going down and having a play at someone's practice room.

When Look Blue Go Purple formed in 1983, everything seemed very easy. There were lots of practice rooms and always people to borrow gear off. There was no worry about having to be professional

⁶⁸ see Appendix 2.

⁶⁹ An example of this is The Weeds, a collection of members of various bands formed in 1985. Their performances bordered on cabaret, including radical reworkings of old and new songs, as well as some off beat originals. On one occasion the band played trouser-less to an under - age audience in the Dunedin Town Hall.

⁷⁰ interview with Peter Gutteridge, 18/7/91.



Fig 10. The Chills, 1981. (L to R) Martin Phillipps, Fraser Batts, Alan Haig, Terry Moore.

and there appeared to be a large number of people making music.⁷¹ Look Blue Go Purple, as an all women's band, were an exception within the community, though its members had all previously been part of the scene.⁷² The bands in the scene were predominantly, though not exclusively male. Only four women had played in bands previously mentioned. The women who had formed Look Blue Go Purple did so, not because they felt excluded, but because they recognized that there was something intangibly different about a group of women making music. In fact some of them had played in short - lived bands prior to forming Look Blue Go Purple. The experience of Norma O'Malley is typical of how people came to be part of the community. When her family moved to Dunedin in her sixth - form year she first attended Otago Girls High School, but moved to Bayfield High School the following year. As a result of attending those schools O'Malley did not come into contact with the scene until 1982 when she met Kath Webster in her second year at university. Webster flatted with Martyn Bull, who was soon to become The Chills drummer. With his encouragement O'Malley soon learnt the drums and played in a band with Bull called Permanent Tourists. The fragmented nature of the community at that stage is illustrated in the fact that she did not meet people like Carter and Gutteridge until the following year when Look Blue Go Purple formed.⁷³

Life at this stage was fairly much a carefree process. The community were largely the same age with the result that they had left school at approximately the same time. By 1982 few of them had gone into employment; most were unemployed or at a tertiary institution. A few worked at Governors which had been taken over in

⁷¹ interview with Norma O'Malley, 27/8/91.

⁷² Drummer Lesley Paris had been to school with the Kaikorai Valley High School members of Bored Games, the others had just come in as they met members of the community in the course of their socializing.

⁷³ Norma O' Malley , op cit.

1981 by a three - person collective which included the most socially acceptable member of Sneaky Feelings, David Pine. There had always been a slight divergence in the scene between those who had become serious about their music and those who simply used a band as an opportunity to enjoy themselves. It largely came down to different personalities and maturities. Brakes' celebration of hedonism' is an applicable label for parts of the scene. The desire to enjoy yourself and get 'out of it', the desire that had propelled Chris Knox, remained. There was plenty of alcohol and other recreational drug use. The latter, largely marijuana, and occasionally hallucinogenics like LSD and magic mushrooms, were not pivotal to the creation of the music.

A lot was going on that could only be termed idleness. As people moved out of home into flats, more time would be spent together. Male musicians armed with alcohol would discuss music until early in the morning. The flats themselves were largely occupied by fellow musicians or people closely affiliated with bands, thus intensifying the 'cosiness' of the scene.⁷⁴ Alastair Galbraith considers that The Rip would have been on the periphery had he not moved into a flat populated by musicians in 1984. By this stage things had become more and more of a cosy party scene.⁷⁵

Although on occasion people would make disparaging comments in interviews about the state of their social scene the community appears to have sustained its momentum until at least 1985, if not longer. Music was the common link to foster a social

⁷⁴ *ibid.* Flats would stay within the social group although tenants would change. In the first half of the 1980s, Cumberland St. was a popular location with three flats housing members of the scene. One the old Yoga Centre, had a large open are which was regularly used for gigs. Flats in Dundas St and above the George Street shops were also popular.

⁷⁵ Alastair Galbraith, *op cit.* The social side of the scene is also recorded in two video clips made by The Verlaines and Look Blue Go Purple. The video for the 1983 release of 'Death and The Maiden' is filmed in Jane Dodd's flat, and features the band and a large number of friends and fellow musicians. The 1987 video for 'Cactus Cat' features the band and friends at the beach.

identity between these people. As these people socialized together they learnt things off each other. The isolation of Dunedin, and its lack of concern with fashion, accentuated the fermentation of the scene; it continued to develop its own reference points. As The Stones put it in their distinctively cynical way:

It's almost like its just us lot PLAYING TO EACH OTHER, all the different bands. People can say that's EGOCENTRIC or whatever . . . that's a word someone said the other day. But I mean we're HAPPY, WHATEVER. No one's particularly planning anything. We drift along.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ *Rip It Up*, June 1983, p.12 (original emphasis).

Chapter Two- *An Aesthetic of Sorts:*

"So many bands around,
In such a tiny town.
And all of us sound
like the Velvet Underground."¹

This chapter will focus on the common musical attitudes this rock community shared. These will be discussed generally before looking at the emphasis different bands placed on aspects of the shared ethos. The final section discusses the split that occurred within the community as some bands were presented with opportunities for success.

The Dunedin bands possessed an aesthetic which valued 'dirty' art over 'clean' art ; an approach which saw perfection in the roughness of the music. The aesthetic was based on a belief in the primary importance of the song ; the idea that a song is an important entity and a valid statement on its own. The execution of the song , its presentation, did not matter as much. The Enemy and The Clean had inspired the younger musicians with short melodic songs within a strong punk format. Long songs were not something the following waves of bands saw as acceptable. This legacy was imbued with a revulsion towards instrumental solos. Everybody worked within the ' song', there was no hierarchy of instruments.² Later waves of bands also picked up on the simplicity of The Enemy's songs:

The songs aren't meant to be clever. We don't stand up

¹ Martin Phillipps, "After They Told Me She Was Gone", copyright 1982, used by permission of the author. Phillipps has never sung this tongue - in - cheek verse.

² An idea expressed by Martin Phillipps in *Contrast*, October 1989, Flying Nun Press Files.

on stage and say, 'We want to be clever, we want people to notice our clever arrangements.' As far as I'm concerned, all I want to do is play decent songs the way I like.³

The definition of what is a good song is, of course very arbitrary in itself, and reflects the music you listen to. In this respect, Roy Colbert played an important role in the development of the community's musical tastes. Colbert, who in the late 1970s was the *Evening Star's* sports editor, ran a second-hand record shop in upper Stuart St. Open in the afternoon, it was visited frequently by local musicians. As people like Martin Phillipps and Shayne Carter became interested in pop/rock music they frequented Colbert's shop, and benefited from his encyclopaedic knowledge of music. In some ways a mentor, Colbert did not tell them what to play but made them aware of bands they might not otherwise have come in contact with.⁴ In effect he provided a link to the music of the 1960s. Aside from more obvious artists such as Bob Dylan and The Byrds, Colbert introduced the musicians to more obscure 1960s bands : Moby Grape, the 13th Floor Elevators, the Electric Prunes and American garage bands such as The Seeds and Count Five, to name just a few. In searching out music the musicians went backwards not forwards. They looked to the last twenty years of rock music, not to the pages of the latest American or British music magazine.

American band the Velvet Underground had a great deal of influence on the Dunedin musicians. Formed in 1965, the band's five year career went largely unnoticed at the time. By the late 1970s, however, the significance of their music, particularly their first three albums, had become apparent to the international music media. They seemed to have pre-dated a lot of the subsequent trends in alternative music. In the first instance the Dunedin musicians saw in the Velvet

³ Wayne Elsey, quoted in *Rip It Up*, April 1984, p.22.

⁴ Shayne Carter, op cit

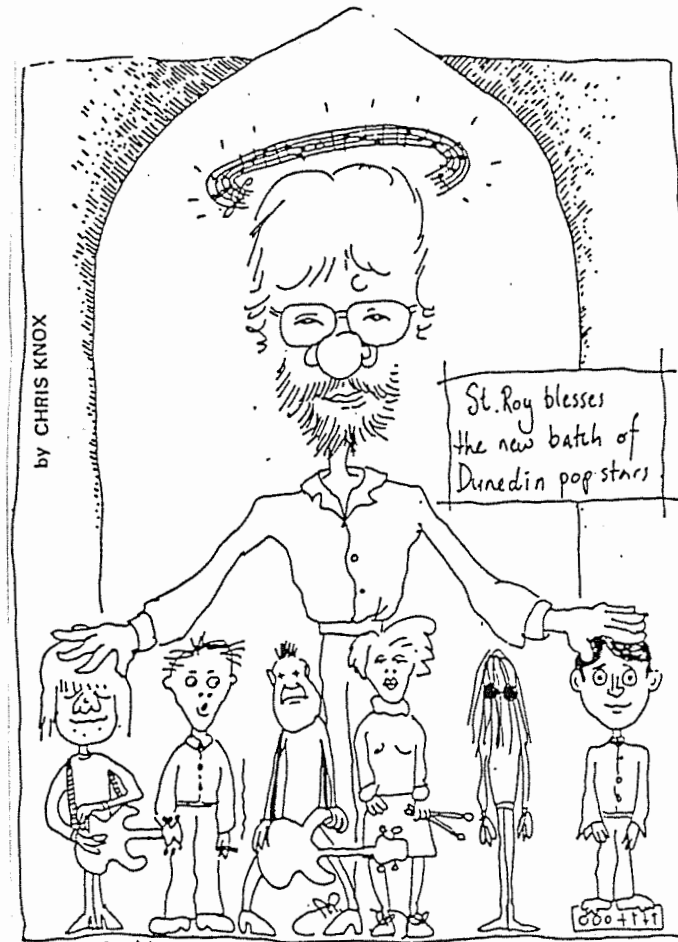


Fig 11. Chris Knox takes a lighthearted look at Roy Colbert's role in the music community.

Underground the example of a band which had experimented with music. Specifically, for Martin Phillipps at least, the Velvet Underground also provided an example of "beautiful songs played in a raw way"; the idea that a song is more beautiful the rougher it is played. For Phillipps the turning point came when he heard the Velvet Underground's 1966 version of their song 'Heroin'. Previously he had only heard Velvet Underground's vocalist Lou Reed's 1970s version. In comparison to Reed's slick 1970s treatment, the original recording was rough, both in production quality and playing. But Phillipps believed the original was the better for it.⁵ What attracted the musicians to the music of the Velvet Underground and other bands was its simplicity. In 1982 Jeff Batts told *Critic*, The Stones wanted to emulate The Velvet Underground's "talent of making a simple riff sound great."⁶ The enjoyment of rock music, what makes a good song, however, remains subjective and intangible:

There have been Double Happys' gigs that have just been absolute magic. Where there's this feeling, times - it sounds like a load of shit - when I've stopped playing and thought, 'That was magic, that was wonderful.' That's the sort of thing that makes me want to waste my time getting up on stage with a band and playing guitar. It really is really good. It's not a pose, it's not fucking anything - it's a really wonderful feeling.⁷

Only when the bands started to interact with musicians from other centres did the uniqueness of this attitude to the song become apparent. As David Pine remarked:

It was something I took for granted would be elsewhere, but it isn't. Elsewhere having a hit is important, but having a good song is only a small part of having a hit.⁸

⁵ Martin Phillipps, op cit.

⁶ quoted in *Critic* 14/6/82.

⁷ Wayne Elsey quoted in *Rip It Up*, July 1985, p.6

The low priority given to the idea of 'having a hit' also contributed to this music community's aesthetic. Dunedin's isolation from fashion centres and subsequent lack of concern with trends - if not a cynicism about fashion and trends - contributed to the lack of importance attributed to commercial recognition. This was expressed in the idea of authentic music, which legitimized the ignorance of contemporary musical trends. An adherence to authentic music involved stepping outside the confines of musical fashion and justified an ignorance of any boundaries of what was considered popular.⁹ This in turn became accentuated by the musicians' interest in the music of the 1960s and early 1970s as opposed to contemporary music, with the obvious exception of punk.

The music was, and remains, more important than its commercial success or failure. Nobody in the music community, at least in these early years, expected to achieve commercial success. Those involved simply wanted to make good music and to have a good time. An awareness existed of the negative consequences of success, expressed in the idea of 'selling out' to the music industry:

If you become dedicated and you have to make a living out of it, naturally you have to go for money to survive. That's when the music starts suffering.¹⁰

Within the restriction imposed by the limited size of the market, people can become 'rock stars' in New Zealand. The 1980s saw the establishment of market space for 'teeny-bop' bands - those marketed directly at teenagers on their physical appearance, to an equal if not greater extent than their music. The prime examples of this were Dance Exponents and The Mockers. The former, a Christchurch band, had

⁸ interview with David Pine, 21/7/91.

⁹ Graeme Downes, op cit.

¹⁰ Jeff Batts quoted in *Radio Times*, 1982, The Stones scrapbook (Jeff Batts).

played in Dunedin prior to their success. In that time they had become known to local bands, particularly, The Rip who had supported them on several occasions. The perceived compromises associated with success were clearly spelt out in 'Wow', a Rip song about 'selling out' inspired by the Dance Exponents perceived sell - out.¹¹

Wow so you've made it
But wow you've paid for it
I can tell.
Wow you're a big shot
Because you're rich
And I'm not.

Wow they all listen to you
But now what do you go and do?
You say what everybody says
You play what everybody plays
And you sing those same empty cliches
So you think that's smart
Yeah well it's not.

The members of this music community believed that the music would suffer when you had to write what the record company wanted. The authenticity associated with simply writing music for yourself would be threatened ; you would write for profit rather than enjoyment. The perceived authenticity of their music was significant. They saw it as more personal than the 'manufactured' music which filled the music charts and radio playlists. It had more to do with real people; the 'same empty cliches' were not used. Although in the early 1980s 'making it' did not often enter people's minds most of those involved in the scene believed that something new was happening: the bands considered their music special-

I certainly knew our music and that of the other bands
could foot it in the rest of the world, all we needed was
the rest of the world to come to the party.¹²

¹¹ Alastair Galbraith, op cit. In hindsight Galbraith believes that Dance Exponents succeeded with more integrity than most.

This self belief was fuelled by a youthful arrogance, punkish energy and the genuine belief that there was more music, more musical ideas and hence more inspiration in their songs compared to most other contemporary music. In short the lack of expectation or aspiration for success fed the local scene's ethos, an ethos ultimately rooted in punk values with their stress on the rejection of 'pop stars' and the songs sanctioned by the music industry. Although the rock community borrowed this notion of not separating audience and performer from punk, the belief had existed at the core of folk music.¹³ This also carried with it the idea of 'do-it-yourself', to which these Dunedin musicians had emphatically added 'doing-it-for-yourself'.¹⁴ In comparison to bands determined to catch the 'public eye' and make money, concentrating on pleasing yourself - it was argued - ensured you continued to do what you wanted to do.¹⁵ Your music remained authentic as it was what you wanted to write rather than what you were told to write or what you hoped would attract success ; crucially the writer and performer remained in total control.

Graeme Downes' argues that the music community explicitly saw in the punk ideal of do-it-yourself the acknowledgement of a ubiquitous potential:

Dunedin imbued the punk idea of just doing it with the idea that everyone's got the stuff inside them. It's just a matter of bringing it out, it doesn't matter if you can't

¹² Graeme Downes, op cit.

¹³ *Rip It Up*, March 1982, p.13. " When we started playing , it was against [the concept of pop stars], and I'm still just as angry about the whole thing now as I was then. The person standing watching us playing is no better or different than I am and we want to keep it that way. I hate drum rostrums because its like elevating yourself above people."-Hamish Kilgour (drummer for The Clean).

¹⁴ E McDonnell, ' Green Grass and High Tides Forever', *Village Voice Rock & Roll Quarterly*, Summer 1990, p.23. McDonnell points out that that this belief played into New Zealand's do-it-yourself national ethic.

¹⁵ This idea is expressed explicitly by Robert Scott in the *New Zealand Times*, 25/11/84, Flying Nun Press Files.

play, just bring it out. So everyone concentrated on bringing out what they knew they had rather than trying to imitate or rebel against things from the outside.¹⁶

Chris Knox believed that this rejection of the idea of 'paying your dues' was also an important attitude shared by the community:

There was a desire to do your own stuff and get it up there in front of people as quickly as possible without worrying too much about frills and getting all the skills.¹⁷

The lack of concern with 'getting all the skills' comprised the aesthetic's third component. This is the attitude to musicianship. Shayne Carter summed this up: "Someone once asked me why I didn't take formal music lessons. I said it doesn't matter how much technical know how you have if you can write a song from the gut. A good song hits you in the gut"¹⁸ Although the majority of musicians had some music lessons as children these were not on the instruments they took up when bands were formed.¹⁹ Even Graeme Downes, who had had the largest amount of musical training, still had no idea how to play guitar. The lack of skill made no difference to the musicians' attitude:

Early on we all wanted to play - we all loved music and we convinced ourselves that we were pretty good. . . .If it

¹⁶ Graeme Downes, op cit.

¹⁷ Chris Knox, op cit.

¹⁸ quoted in *New Zealand Times*, 20/10/85, p. 37. Flying Nun Press Files.

¹⁹ The exceptions were Rachel Phillipps and Fraser Batts. Phillipps had two terms of guitar lessons at Intermediate School, as well as some piano lessons. She ended up playing guitar for The Same and keyboards for The Chills. Bored Games guitarist, Batts, had had two terms of classical guitar lessons. When he joined The Chills, however he played keyboards. The skills other musicians had picked up were used as bands developed eg. Look Blue Go Purple made use of Norma O'Malley's flute lessons. Alastair Galbraith played violin on some of Robert Scott's band The Bats' recordings. Robert Scott's piano lessons enabled him to write the keyboard part for The Clean's 'Tally Ho'. Although Martin Phillipps' played it on the recorded version, Scott frequently played organ for The Clean during live performances.

had got through to us how bad we were, that we were as bad as I think we were and it had dawned on us, we would never have carried on-but fortunately it didn't.²⁰

This lack of musical skill is not unusual for 'garage musicians', nor for rock musicians in general, as Wicke points out. "Rock musicians often do not learn to play their instruments in the traditional way, but learn to control them, exhaust their tonal possibilities and to work creatively with them, often using unconventional methods."²¹ Limited musicianship had an impact on the songs the music community produced, most obviously in the emphasis the bands' placed on melody and the influence of David Kilgour's guitar sound, especially his use of open guitar chords.

The emphasis on melody - an important component of what made a 'good song' for these particular Dunedin bands - can also be traced to their initially limited musicianship. Rudimentary musicianship tends to produce simpler songs with the result that the song's melodies have to be better. With only two chords something else is needed to produce a good song in this case, strong vocal melodies. As The Clean's Hamish Kilgour stated in 1981, "early on the trick was to work as much melody as possible into the white noise."²² The emphasis on melody, apart from making a good song, as defined by this group of musicians, created a very appealing song.

David Kilgour had no knowledge of guitar chords so consequently the chords he used had little to do with any formal notion of guitar playing. He simply tuned his guitar in a way which would make it easier

²⁰ David Pine, in reference to *Sneaky Feelings*, quoted in *Otago Daily Times*, 18/9/85.

Sneaky Feelings' Envelope, Hocken Library.

²¹ Wicke, *Rock Music*, p.22. This is actually quoted out of context, as Wicke is arguing for an emphasis on sound in rock music, and consequently an emphasis on the role of the recording studio in rock music. The very things these musicians were rebelling against.

²² *Rip It Up*, September 1981, p.8.

for him to make the guitar sounds he wanted. The result was a large guitar sound with harmonics 'bouncing' around; a product of his use of open chords, as opposed to bar chords.²³ Kilgour's guitar playing style also tended towards embellishing the sound as opposed to the more traditional idea of the lead guitar's role.

Musicianship did improve. It had to. As the song-writers continued to write songs which out - stripped the bands' ability to play them, it became a case of trying to be in a position to play the next new song well enough. This could only but create a gradual improvement and an increasing respect for themselves as musicians.²⁴ Some people began to take music more seriously as the 1980s developed. This will be discussed below. It remained, though, for most band members, a process of relying on intuition and emotion rather than trained musicianship.

A further result of the emphasis on the song rather than its execution is the lack of attention paid to the presentation or image of the band in performance. This is the aesthetic's fourth aspect. The Clean's no fuss, anti-presentation approach to performance highlighted for the younger bands what was important - the music. The band's were not interested in consciously projecting an image to the audience. Although The Enemy/Toy Love had left the legacy of original music, Knox's performance and stage persona had implicitly placed an emphasis on presentation, albeit of less importance than the song.²⁵

²³ A Bar chord entails having one's control finger completely over the guitar's fret. David Pine suggests that the hypnotic nature of the open guitar chord also made it attractive to teenage musicians.

²⁴ David Pine, op cit. Pine believes that the rejection of a high standard of musicianship was taken to an extreme where it hindered development ; some people closing their ears to anything which looked like what a trained guitarist would do. It must be remembered that Pine's band Sneaky Feelings was prone to attempt more complicated songs within a slightly different musical style. As mentioned in the previous chapter this resulted in, initially, only a grudging acceptance of the band.

²⁵ *In Touch*, 14, November 1981, p. xiii. Russell Brown's review of The Clean in Christchurch notes this difference in emphasis: " All The Clean lack is that Knoxian projection that makes a good pop group into a great one. Perhaps that could come with

The lack of effort put into the visual presentation by the bands has many roots. The sheer fact that Knox had put an emphasis on visual presentation was reason enough to avoid it. Most post - Enemy bands did not want to be seen as copying The Enemy too much. For those who did try for some flamboyance on stage there were plenty of people to make the comparison, as Shayne Carter found out. Limited musical ability likewise precluded any disposition to a stage performance. People were too busy looking at instruments as they played them to have time to concentrate on projecting an image. After Bored Games none of the major bands had a specialist vocalist; people played an instrument and sung. Playing to an audience of friends also made it difficult to 'perform' or to dress-up. Friends would be well aware it was fake and could, in this instance, make a person very self-conscious. A more important reason, however, is that even had there been a desire to enhance a band's visual image, no-one had the money to do it. A reason which implies the convenience of the aesthetic.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that desire was there. Other bands followed The Clean in projecting films over themselves as they played. In Christchurch, on one occasion, The Clean played behind a four metre wall of plastic, which the audience had to tear down to enable them to see the band.²⁶ Although this appears to have been an unique event, bands tended to have a backdrop which they hung behind them when they played. An example, along with posters, of how band members' visual arts skills could be incorporated into their interest in music. Unlike bands aiming for success within the music industry, where image plays a fundamental role in marketing, these activities did not reflect any *conscious* attempt on the part of bands to project an image. But to say because of this that the bands did not have an image is

stronger, more personal vocals or through developing a better visual focus. Perhaps. All you have with The Clean at present is the music. And that will do for now."

²⁶ *Christchurch Press*, 10/6/82, Flying Nun Press Files.

incorrect. The bands played in their normal clothes. The male musicians tended to wear jeans, a t-shirt, and sneakers. Occasionally a good shirt, probably bought from an Opportunity Shop, would be worn, normally paisley and preferably not ironed. If it was cold a baggy jersey would also be worn. The female musicians also wore jeans or a floral/paisley dress bought from a second-hand shop. Whatever the clothing, paisley aside, the preference was for dark colours. This look was universal on the independent music scene, having been defined in the post-1967 period of youth culture. This is an example of the currency of ideas that could be tapped into.

The other aspect of presentation which received limited attention from this group of musicians was the band's sound. This lack of interest or investment in fidelity can be seen as a further example of the musician's initial technical ineptitude. The gear that bands owned tended to be cheap rather than of good quality. This was accompanied, amongst the majority of the community, by a lack of curiosity as to how amplifiers worked. Alastair Galbraith recalls not really knowing what to do, just "turning on an amplifier and twiddling a few knobs until it sounded *all right*."²⁷

The music community received criticism for the lack of emphasis it placed on presentation. Malcolm Overton, one of Dunedin's few promoters, criticized this aspect of the bands in the beginning of 1982. Although he had arranged for the bands to begin playing at the Empire, Overton had become disillusioned with them and the example they were setting other local bands. He claimed they were 'self obsessed musicians [who] have no idea at all about entertaining the public.' The public, Overton claimed, wanted "a good show and a good time", and publicans wanted bands who could professionally provide this. A good show involved "accessible songs, good quality sound and lighting

²⁷ Alastair Galbraith, op cit.

opinion these ingredients were "severely lacking in Dunedin" at the time.²⁸ By the end of the year a band had appeared in Dunedin which took an approach similar to the one Overton advocated. This band, the Netherworld Dancing Toys is an anomaly in the taxonomy of Dunedin bands, as its first three releases were on Flying Nun. They were, however, not part of the music community discussed in this essay, in fact they contained a former member of Static, Bored Games' teenage rivals. Making its debut in June 1982 the Netherworld Dancing Toys were a seven piece band with a brass section, and thus in Dunedin were seen as a soul band. This, as guitarist Malcolm Black explained, did not result from any ambition to be Dunedin's young soul rebels - "We're soul by default because we're seen as the nearest thing to it and nobody else is playing it."²⁹ The band also differed from Dunedin's other Flying Nun bands through their concentration on a light show, PA and overall production. The Netherworld Dancing Toys received some criticism for being on Flying Nun:

People say we are taking it fairly seriously so why muck around with Flying Nun. The fact of the matter is that they have been good to us, we like them, and they fulfil our needs.³⁰

The band eventually turned professional and they became one of the country's top touring acts. In 1984 they became the first band to sign to the New Zealand branch of the British based Virgin Records. Their first Virgin single made little impact, but the following single , 'For Today' and the subsequent album, 'Painted Years' , were very successful locally. Recognition for this came when the band won six awards at the the New Zealand Music Awards.

²⁸ quoted in the *Otago Daily Times* 9/2/82. p.23.

²⁹ quoted in *Rip It Up*, July 1983, p.14.

³⁰ Nick Sampson, quoted in the *Otago Daily Times*, 29/2/84, p.23

ii)

Differing emphasis was placed on varying aspects of this aesthetic by the bands formed from the music community. The bands did not rigidly adhere to the aesthetic but the music they produced was a product of this approach. The following section looks within the community at the unique in each band's attitude.

The band most liked within the community was The Stones, a three-piece which on the surface appeared to differ from its contemporaries. The Stones had the requisite passion, but directed it towards not being 'passionate'. Bassist Jeff Batts explained:

When we first started we wanted to do something radically different. . . .Our philosophy at first was to do everything the wrong way, do things you're not supposed to do.³¹

They did this initially with their choice of name, and followed it up with performances with an anarchic streak.³² They delighted in confounding the audience. Tending to play with their backs to the audience, they occasionally would play incredibly boring 20 minute versions of songs, knowing, as Chris Knox pointed out, that whatever followed would be greeted with rapture.³³ Reviewing them in 1982, Shayne Carter described the pattern their sound had evolved into -"A scratchy guitar over a full melodic bass with Graeme Anderson's drums in solid support and rarely intruding-all tempered with an appealing messiness and outright sloppiness."³⁴ Reviewers from outside Dunedin heard a strong sixties influence, notably in the sneering vocals of Batts and Elsey, which echoed the Velvet Underground.

³¹ *Critic*, 14/6/82.

³² World renowned British band the Rolling Stones are universally known as The Stones. Naming yourself The Stones was tantamount to calling yourself The Beatles.

³³ 'Dunedin 1982, *Radio With Pictures*, 1982.

³⁴ *Radio Times*, 1982, The Stones Scrapbook, (Jeff Batts).

When The Stones split in 1983, guitarist Wayne Elsey and his fellow former member of Bored Games, Shayne Carter, formed the Double Happys. The smirk and the sneer met the drunk and the obnoxious when towards the end of 1983 the Double Happys - a band confident that it could write rock n roll epics - made its debut. Carter's longest surviving band since Bored Games, they lasted until June 1985 when Wayne Elsey tragically died on tour.³⁵ Retaining the punk ethic of wanting to elicit a response whether positive or negative, the Double Happys usually resorted to humorously abusing the audience. Humour was an important part of the Double Happys' approach. While retaining a seriousness about their music, they recognized the humour and self parody, intentional or otherwise, that had existed throughout the history of rock 'n' roll.³⁶ The approach of the band was not, however, as universally accepted as that of The Stones:

We did it because it was fun, because it took the piss out of a lot of things, including ourselves. We weren't about to censor ourselves because of it, but in hindsight it did turn a lot of people off the band.³⁷

The Verlaines and Sneaky Feelings occupied the other end of the scale. These two bands often played together as the community saw them as doing slightly more complicated, slightly different things. Downes, while acknowledging the influence of David Kilgour's guitar

³⁵ Originally a duo, the band became a three - piece at the beginning of 1984 when John Collie replaced drum - machine Herbie Fuckface. See also note 64.

³⁶ *New Zealand Times*, 20/10/85, p.37. "Humour is really an essential part of rock. Think of the really great, great people like Little Richard, Elvis Presley, and even The Beatles and The Sex Pistols. Sometimes you see clips of those people and they're so outrageous all you can do is laugh...

"... We used to get down and shake our heads like heavy metalers and quite often people wouldn't notice you were joking so you can come off looking grossly unsubtle! But underneath it all we were very serious about the music."

³⁷ Shayne Carter, op cit.



Fig. 12. the Double Happys, 1985. (L to R). Wayne Elsey, Shayne Carter, John Collie.

on his music, believed that having a more expansionist view of what rock music could do always set The Verlaines apart from bands like The Clean and The Stones.³⁸ This came simply from a wider knowledge of music that came about from his fascination with classical music, an interest that began as a child and continued through a university doctorate on Mahler.³⁹ Downes' use of different musical structures, stemmed from a desire to make his songs more narrative, unfolding a plot rather than the normal structure of a rock song. He saw his work as a study in the anatomy of depression.-"In all the songs I am facing problems dissecting , sorting , so the final result is hopefully triumphant."⁴⁰

Sneaky Feeling's difference from other Dunedin bands has already been alluded to. Initially sounding like a garage band they were grouped with this scene. Unlike the other bands this came solely as a result of limited musical ability, rather than any ideological commitment to a more primitive, authentic sound. The strong ideas about what they wanted to do were, in the early 1980s, against the flow of ideas in Dunedin. This resulted in the band not having the basic 'feel' their contemporaries had; Sneaky Feelings were more interested in getting exactly the right note.⁴¹ They also functioned more as a band; three song-writers and vocalists and no obvious front-person. Their important influences differed from those of the other bands in the community. Although ignoring The Enemy and The Clean, they acknowledged The Byrds and The Beatles, but Sneaky Feelings also

³⁸ Graeme Downes, op cit.

³⁹ *Spin*, Flying Nun Press File. Downes described his first encounter with classical music, aged ten-" There were beautiful tunes, bizzare sounds, scary things, things that made you feel really cold and frightened. Just an entire array of expressions I hadn't really come across before ."

⁴⁰ *RAM*, 10/8/88, Flying Nun Press File.

⁴¹ an idea expressed by David Pine, *Otago Daily Times*, 18/9/85.



Fig. 13. Sneaky Feelings, 1982. (L to R). Kathryn Tyrie, Matthew Bannister, David Pine, Martin Durrant.



Fig 14. The Verlaines, 1982. (L to R). Jane Dodd, Graeme Downes, Alan Haig.

looked to artists such as folk band Fairport Convention, Neil Young , and less left-of-centre artists like Stevie Wonder. As George Kay pointed out in 1986, Sneaky Feelings' possessed a "shambling old world fussiness and almost obsessive sincerity to progress and success" which separated them off from their local contemporaries.⁴²

Lying between these two extremes is Martin Phillipps' The Chills. Phillipps, like Sneaky Feelings, tended towards a more obviously serious approach to his music:

I tried for a long time to be like The Clean and The Stones. I used to really envy their ability to play a song differently each time. Sometimes it didn't come off, but when it did there was this pristine perfection. Just incredible. But I finally realized that my strength lay in working at things and building on them.⁴³

Phillipps' aim of trying to capture those feelings which are not named lends his music to a more impressionistic and atmospheric feel. This is apparent in songs such as 'Night of Chill Blue', 'Pink Frost' and 'Whole Weird World' in which he attempted to catch what he saw as the essential nature of New Zealand's landscape, its magical qualities. His early work had a strong theme of escapism. The lyrics of songs like 'Rolling Moon' and 'Kaleidoscope World' show this theme. They also resulted in The Chills' music being labelled psychedelic. Phillipps' saw this label as misleading , arguing that the songs reflected a 17 year old "having fun with words and colours and reading a lot of [science fiction author] Ray Bradbury."⁴⁴ The Chills' music, though, tended to be more immediately accessible than that other Dunedin bands. The *Listener* described 'Rolling Moon' in the following terms, "an irresistible piece of pop that bounces from ear to ear."⁴⁵

⁴² *Rip It Up*, December 1986, p.18

⁴³ Martin Phillipps quoted in *Garage* 6, p.6

⁴⁴ Martin Phillipps quoted in *Contrast*, October 1989, Flying Nun Press File.



Fig. 15. The Chills, 1982. (L to R) Terry Moore, Rachel Phillipps, Martyn Bull, Martin Phillipps.

⁴⁵ *Listener*, 18/12/82. p.58.

Look Blue Go Purple, a band of five women, formed in February 1983. Sonorous and up - front vocals, and the occasional flute, separated their sound from that of their contemporaries, but as *Garage* put it, "the guitars don't take you north of Pine Hill".⁴⁶ They were, however, different from other all-women's bands, lacking the reggae feel which characterizes the sound of New Zealand's few women's bands.⁴⁷ As an all - women's band they were often presumed to be overtly political, but this was not the case:

We deliberately set out to be an all-women band It was deliberate but not from any radical feminist standpoint. It's still feminist though in that we all wanted to play with other women.⁴⁸

They wrote from a women's point of view, but for their own enjoyment, not for a political purpose.⁴⁹ They had a relaxed attitude to playing , similar to that of their male contemporaries, and practices were just as likely to end up as drinking sessions. They had a more democratic approach, however, than the mixed bands they all played or were to play in.⁵⁰

By contrast the songs of The Rip, to a greater extent than other bands, tended towards self-indulgent introversion, teenage songs about mistreatment and "the horrors and joys of drugs [and] the loneliness and boredom of being on the dole"⁵¹. Simple three chord songs, they were also incredibly 'catchy', which obviously created an appeal, though in the first three years of their existence The Rip quickly became one of the city's three perceived 'support bands , along with the Blue Meanies and Gammaunche. This was a product of both their age and the fact that

⁴⁶ *Garage* 3 (no page numbers).

⁴⁷ *Rip It Up*, February 1987 , p.12

⁴⁸ Kathy Bull, quoted in *ibid*

⁴⁹ Denise Roughan, quoted in *ibid*.

⁵⁰ Kathy Bull, quoted in *ibid*.

⁵¹ *Critic* , 3/5/1983, p.10.



Fig 16. Look Blue Go Purple, 1985 (clockwise) Lesley Paris, Kath Webster, Denise Roughan, Kathy Bull, Norma O' Malley.

they did not own any of their own gear. As The Rip developed, the lyrics more and more became the focus for Galbraith as he began to perceive that aspect of the song as the most 'artistic'.⁵² *Garage* described The Rip in the following way:

The Rip is about music sprayed from the gut. Played from the head it gets lost in a dirgy void. It can be an embarrassing spectacle almost . . . to watch - you don't know exactly where the hell to look. But there's a perverse fascination that can become a Roman craving for blood on the rock.⁵³

The Orange, were the vehicle for the song-writing talents of Andrew Brough. His fascination with 1960s pop placed the band more towards the sound of Sneaky Feelings, and therefore on the periphery of the scene. *Garage* described one Orange song, in the following manner - "it nags and revolves with the simplicity of every great early 60's beat pop classic."⁵⁴ The Orange were consistently labelled as a 'psychedelic' band or as producers of 'dream like pop songs'. This appears to have been more the product of Brough's choir - boy vocals than the band's music. They only released one record, 'Fruit Salad Lives', which did not reflect their musical strengths.

For most of these bands a song's music was its most important aspect. Analysis of the lyrics of these Dunedin bands, therefore, serves a limited use. Most songwriters, at least initially, paid little attention to a song's lyric. This tended to reflect the fact the only forum for the bands was live performance where the poor standard of the P.A. made it difficult to hear lyrics. The Rip's Alastair Galbraith addressed the problem in 'Famous Face':

Why do I stand here playing

⁵² Alastair Galbraith, op cit.

⁵³ *Garage* 3

⁵⁴ *Garage* 4



Fig 17. The Rip, 1984. Bk. Robbie Muir, Jeff Harford.
Ft. Alastair Galbraith.

When you don't even hear a word that I'm saying
Maybe we are waiting for a change
Maybe we do it cos we are strange.

Chris Knox's lyrics with The Enemy had tended to grapple with issues and ideas, normally sex and gender related. The bands that followed, though, moved away from the didactic and political. The Clean's lyrics were more suggestive and minimalistic. Martin Phillipps and Graeme Downes wrote more elaborate and embroidered lyrics. Downes is the most fastidious lyricist amongst this group of writers:

If I wrote lyrics, just to fit the music they'd be rubbish -
just leave you dead. I can usually turn out the music but
lyrics are the real problem. You get paranoid and clam up
and it starts a vicious circle.⁵⁵

The other lyricists, at least initially, wrote lyrics that could sing well - the melody and basic rhythm of the song remained paramount. Capturing the mood of the song was what was considered important. The lyrical content tended towards the depressed and angst ridden. Evelyn McDonnell argued that a cathartic approach to song writing united the bands ; that they are a community based on personal exegesis.⁵⁶ This reflects the song-writers' belief that their songs must be authentic, must originate from their own lives - "I just basically talk about my problems in abstract ways. . ."⁵⁷

iii)

Although these bands each represented different approaches to music they all subscribed to the aesthetic outlined above. As the

⁵⁵ Graeme Downes quoted in *Garage* 1 (no page numbers).

⁵⁶ E. McDonnell, *op cit*, p.23.

⁵⁷ Shayne Carter quoted in *Rip It Up*, July 1985. p. 6

opportunities to achieve success under their own control expanded, however, a split occurred in the community's attitude to music. When people outside Dunedin started to find out about their music, more opportunities arose. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this led to bands starting to tour their music. Suddenly it all was not happening in Dunedin anymore. Motives came to be questioned. The first time The Chills returned from a tour to Auckland, Shayne Carter greeted Phillipps with the comment, 'so you think you're rock stars now'.⁵⁸ The community was to become divided between those who recognized the potential for a career within music, and those for whom music remained solely a vehicle for enjoyment. This is illustrated by the following extract from an interview with The Stones:

Is there a MOTIVATION problem in Dunedin?

Wayne Stone: "Oh yeah definitely. . .There's lots of people with IDEAS, but there's nothing happening."

So The Stones have been motivation short?

Jeff Stone: "Motivation to do what though. . .We're just playing for our own enjoyment."⁵⁹

The Stones break-up in 1983 can be partially attributed to the change in attitude on this issue that had occurred between Jeff Batts and Wayne Elsey. The latter had begun to take himself seriously as a musician, whereas Batts could never respect himself as a musician. He merely played for enjoyment and had no desire to do anything more than necessary.⁶⁰ The emphasis placed on enjoyment is also evidenced in The Clean's decision to break-up in June 1982. With two successive Top Five records The Clean, in particular David Kilgour, were feeling a certain amount of pressure to perform consistently to the same high level. The band had become too dominant a concept in the musicians' lives. They therefore decided on a whim of David's to have a 'rest'.

⁵⁸ Martin Phillipps, op cit.

⁵⁹ *Rip It Up*, June 1982, p.12.

⁶⁰ interview with Jeff Batts, 28/6/91.

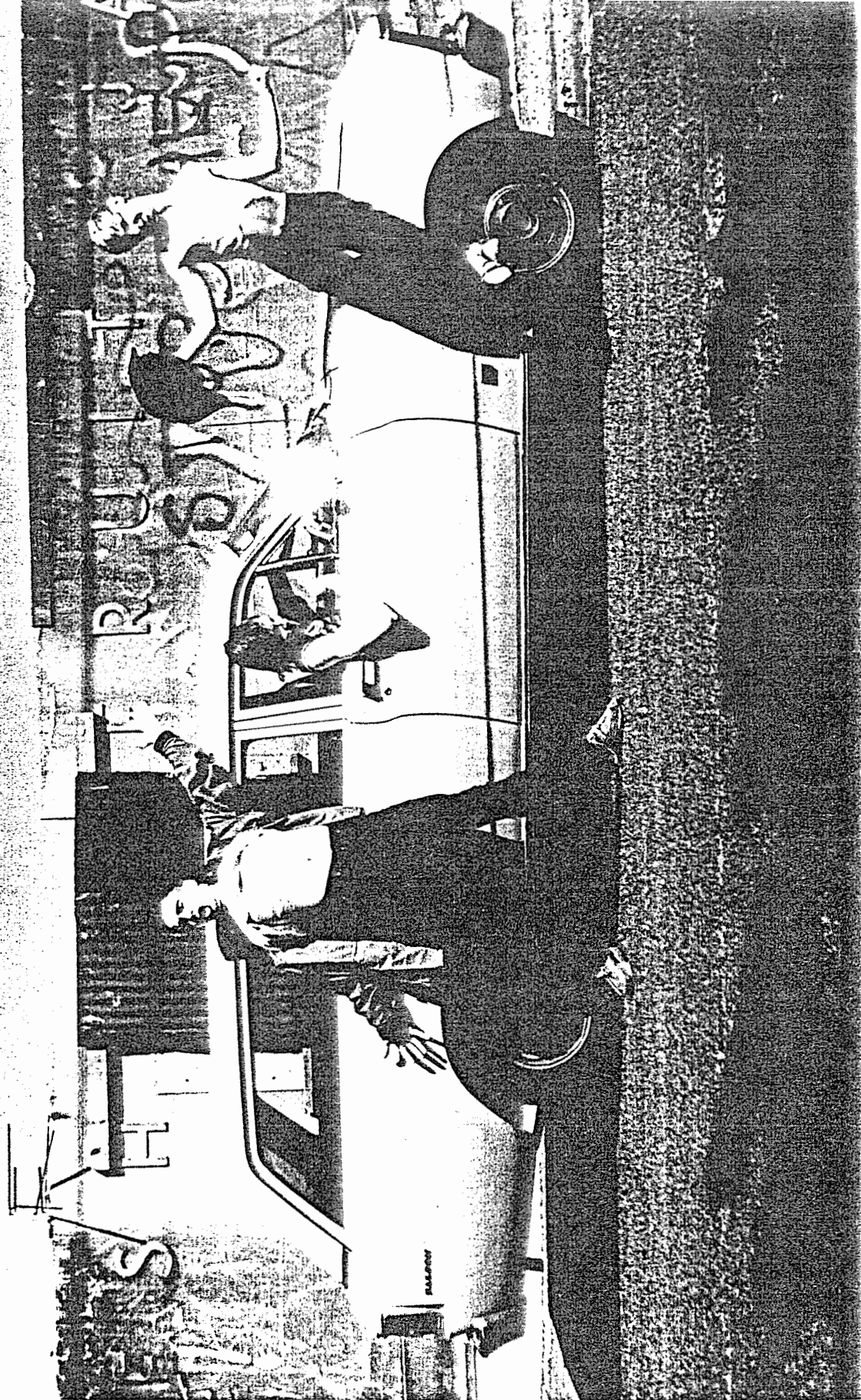


Fig 18. The Stones, 1982. (L to R), Jeff Batts, Graeme Anderson, Wayne Elsey.

Although The Clean's demise shocked and upset fans throughout the country, for its members it was no 'big deal'. What remained important was continuing to make music.⁶¹

A conscious undercurrent existed in parts of the community not to take music seriously as a career. This was based on the belief that those who take music seriously fall into the 'commercial trap'. Bands were formed to have a good time, music was written to please yourself. There may have been a recognition of the possibilities music presented but it still occupied 'leisure time'. University or job commitments came first, especially in regards to playing live. For this community of musicians, music had originated as a way of making life more enjoyable. These Dunedin bands made a lot of recreational music. Conferring central significance on rock music within the structure of leisure, Frith argues, is typical of the teenage use of popular music because youth lack power, which results in young people focussing their lives around an environment that they can control.⁶² Frith's discussion centres around the *consumption* of music. In this community the recreational nature of music *making* came to be stressed. As the 1980s progressed and members left their parent's homes, paid employment became more actively sought. Music continued to be an arena where, through leisure,

⁶¹ David Kilgour op cit, Hamish Kilgour, op cit, Robert Scott, op cit and *Canta*, 10/6/82, Flying Nun Press Files

⁶² quoted in Wicke, op cit, (1990),p.11. Peter Wicke outlines the development of rock music against the post-1945 shift in value from work to leisure; the consequence of the scientific and technical intensification of production processes. Goals such as a purpose in life, opportunities for personal realization and personal values could no longer be sought in work in developed capitalist countries and were therefore transferred to leisure. This led to the development of the 'consumer society' and the emergence of the teenager as an important role player . The teenager's use of popular music in the form of rock 'n' roll was an example of the reduction of art to the level of various forms of mass-media entertainment. Popular music appeared for the first time within a cultural system of references which allowed it to become a fundamental experience, conveying meaning and significance in a manner which had previously been the sole preserve of 'serious art'.

the compensation for deficits in meaning and experience brought about by work was sought. Music was something you were making from nothing ; the enjoyment derived from creating gave immense satisfaction.

This satisfaction could not be found outside the confines of leisure as music was not regarded as viable career option, either by the music community or the wider community. Wayne Elsey, a talented and creative person, was on a Salvation Army work scheme when in 1983, after The Stones' broke-up, he formed the Double Happys with Shayne Carter. Carter himself was in his second year as a journalist at Radio Otago. Although his chosen career, it had become unsatisfying and in early 1984, when the Double Happys were offered a spot on the four band 'Loony Tour', Carter had little hesitation in quitting his job.⁶³ Although this decision involved a recognition of the increased priority music had in his life it also at this stage acknowledged the importance Carter assigned to leisure in his life. Even when musicians came to take themselves seriously, enjoyment remained the aim. This ambivalence was typified by Wayne Elsey. Although he took his music seriously, enjoying life was more important.⁶⁴ Such enjoyment precluded the commitment and discipline necessary for music to become a career.

The first band to make an overt decision to try for some success was The Chills. Martin Phillipps had made a conscious decision to be a musician when he formed The Chills in 1980. His determination to improve his musical skills was noted by other musicians and interested parties who saw him as being more committed than other members of the music community.⁶⁵ In late 1984, The Chills moved to Auckland,

⁶³ Shayne Carter, op cit.

⁶⁴ *Rip It Up*, July 1985. p.14. A weekend on tour in Auckland is briefly described. The accent is on drunken good times. It was on the train from Auckland that Elsey died; skylarking and leaning out on the carriage steps, he was struck by part of a bridge which jutted out.

⁶⁵ Graeme Downes, op cit, David Pine, op cit, Rachel Phillipps, op cit, Jeff Batts, op cit,

where during earlier visits they had consistently gained good responses. Promoter Doug Hood stressed that the opportunity for success was there to be seized; Auckland would only be the first step, before going overseas. Phillipps had begun to recognise that in Dunedin you could only get so far. A lot of people had grown up and left Dunedin or just were not socializing regularly anymore - they had taken what they wanted from the scene. Things had begun to stagnate; it had come down to simply new songs, there were no new happenings.⁶⁶

The decision of Dunedin's highest profile - band to move to Auckland, did not receive universal support from a music community which had previously only looked to itself for acknowledgement. Phillipps was soon defending the choice to the local newspaper's music columnist:

We're starting to cop a bit of flak, but it's not our problem, it's people's attitudes. . . It's a bit naive, really, thinking we're forever going to be a garage band that just plays at the Empire. We've been offered the opportunity to make a real go of it and we're going to take it.⁶⁷

The move resulted in a higher profile for The Chills in New Zealand and it did not take long for the accusations of 'selling out' to appear, especially when they acknowledged in *Rip It Up* that the visual side of the band would have to become an increasing priority.⁶⁸ The Chills appeared on the cover of that issue, the photograph inspiring a letter the following month:

Your Chill's cover, June 1985, instills the true sense of the band. Vanity has replaced spirit. They are drawing

interview with Denise Roughan, 20//7/91, Chris Knox, op cit, Listener, 18/12/82, p.58:

"Phillipps is the best of the city's young song writers, and in a musical scene where the songs often outstrip their writers' ability to perform them, Phillipps is working harder than most to ensure his band is at least reasonably professional. Song endings are not left to chance, monitors are not abhorred."

⁶⁶ Martin Phillipps, op cit.

⁶⁷ *Otago Daily Times*, 1984, The Chills (Envelope), Hocken Library.

⁶⁸ *Rip It Up*, June 1985, p.20

RIP IT UP

The Chills Killing Joke Expendables Jason & the Scorchers Dazz Band

No 95 June 1985

Photo by Terry Moore



Fig 19. The *Rip It Up* cover which angered the 'purists' amongst the The Chills' fans.

their music from the image of what they were rather than the people they are now. They will do well in England.⁶⁹

The winter of 1985 saw the beginning of the end of the active music community, as it has been described. The Chills departure six months earlier, and the death of Wayne Elsey helped realize more apparently the change in attitude; a change that had been gradually fermenting in some quarters of the community ever since the success of The Clean. The decision of some bands to pursue success divided the Dunedin music community. Phillipps' described it to an American music paper in the following terms:

A lot of the Flying Nun bands from back in Dunedin are just making music for music's sake, which is good. They get together a recording session when they have the money and they're content to stay right in Dunedin. They couldn't be bothered to travel 200 miles north to Christchurch much less anyplace else. [The Chills] just want to take it futher, to make more of a career move.⁷⁰

Phillipps saw himself in the role of someone paving a way for his contemporaries to follow. In making a descion to leave Dunedin other bands did follow The Chills; Sneaky Feelings left Dunedin in December 1987 and Strait Jacket Fits left in 1988. Sneaky Feelings left not thinking they would be popstars but with the hope they would might eventually make enough money to produce better records, and possibly even enough to live off their music for a while.⁷¹ Although they managed to tour Europe twice and record a third album, the band broke-up in 1989, having failed in their ultimate aim. Strait Jacket Fits had formed in 1986 with the intention of leaving Dunedin. The band consisted of the Double Happys' Shayne Carter and John Collie and bassist David Wood,

⁶⁹ *Rip It Up*, July 1985, p.20.

⁷⁰ *Boston Rock*, Flying Nun Press File.

⁷¹ David Pine, op cit.

and subsequently guitarist Andrew Brough. Brough's previous band, The Orange, had dissolved in 1986 when it became apparent that the other members, Jonathan Moore and Peter Bragan, were not committed to music. They gave greater priority to their university studies and job, respectively. By 1986 Brough had completed his degree and recognised music as an area he could do well in. The only other musicians in Dunedin he saw with a similar desire and commitment were Strait Jacket Fits. When Brough auditioned and joined, Carter told him they intended to be in England within two years: they toured England three years later, in 1989.⁷²

That other members of the community, at that stage, still saw music as a vehicle solely for enjoyment became apparent when The Chills, with Phillipps as the only member from Dunedin, played in Dunedin during 1987. They received a rapturous reception the night they performed at Sammys Cabaret. The following evening they played at a more alternative venue, the Chippendale House Arts Collective, where they received a relatively hostile reception from parts of the audience. Friends, who had remained in Dunedin noticed changes. The Chills' 'roadie' prevented Alastair Galbraith from reclaiming the 12 string guitar he had lent Phillipps.⁷³ It seemed times had changed for a community which had built itself on unquestionably sharing what little gear they collectively owned. Whether a band had been playing in Dunedin or Auckland no one had needed a 'roadie' before; there had always been a friend around who would help move gear.

In leaving Dunedin, though, Martin Phillipps had wanted to make sure the music that he and his contemporaries had made would not be wasted; would not go unrecognised. Someone had to show the world that this music was special:

Watching the positive people - the numbers are

⁷² interview with Andrew Brough, 23/5/91.

⁷³ Alastair Galbraith, op cit.

dwindling away
Sometimes I wish I could join them, but I'm scared
by the choices they've made. . .
'Cause what are their chances now they've chosen
to settle down
It's not hard to see why there's problems
They've resigned to the wrong way around
And now they're setting goals, making plans
Because they don't want to understand their fear of
death
When the search for truth ultimately fails due to
lack of proof.

What I'm trying to say is there must be a better way
If they'd retained their aspirations
they might have had a chance one day.

I mean does apathy come with age 'cause I'd much
rather go down fighting
Then at least I can go with pride
I'd rather go trying to battle - battle the doubts
inside.

Instead of watching the wrinkles grow deeper and
noticing varicose veins
Laughing at previous actions as the ways of the
brave or the strange
When we thought that the world wouldn't change
Well we must have been out of our brains.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Martin Phillipps, "Brave Words", copyright 1985. Used by permission of the author.

Chapter Three-

PLAYING AND RECORDING:

"Van Morrison said in a recent interview that the music business is a business, and its dollars and cents, charts, units and product, which is totally divorced from what I believe in. Music inspires you. It makes life more enjoyable."¹

This chapter will look at the mediums through which the music community presented its songs to the public - live performance and records. Both these mediums involved the bands entering into some sort of relationship with the pre-existing infrastructure of the New Zealand music industry. In each instance background information on the infrastructure as it existed in the first half of the 1980s will be given before moving on to discuss how the aesthetic of the Dunedin bands affected their approach to these mediums.

Rock/pop music differs from previous music in that it is a product of new technology. From a sociological perspective its significance lies in its use of mass media, and the acknowledgement that it is a form of mass communication.² This entails the recognition that it is produced by large - scale commercial enterprises for a mass audience. Frith reduces the music - business formula to its most basic form: singers provide the art, managers manipulate it into a saleable commodity and record companies give it a vehicle to ride on.³ Thus when rock music is delivered to its audience it becomes a commodity. Entrepreneurs come between the musicians and their audience: in

¹ Hamish Kilgour, quoted in *Rip It Up*, March 1982, p.13.

² P. Wicke, *Rock Music*, 1990. Chapter one .

³ Frith, *The Sociology of Rock*, p.76.

terms of live performances it is the artist's manager and the concert's promoter ; for recording it is the producer and the record company.

Although New Zealand does not possess a music industry of international significance, it is nonetheless an industry which, despite the limited size of the domestic market, operates in the same way as its international counterparts. Toy Love's experiences within this industry had considerable influence on the community of musicians for whom they were an inspiration.⁴ Vocalist Chris Knox was particularly anti the music industry:

The business side of rock 'n' roll is totally despicable and the futher that I personally get away from it in the months since Toy Love have broken up, the more despicable it seems in retrospect.⁵

Toy Love had discovered this to an even greater extent when they went to Australia in 1980 to perform and record an album:

Groups tailor themselves to their audiences and record companies. The companies and the music media have so much power that bands figure out what they want and play it that way.⁶

The essence of their complaints was the lack of control the music industry gave to artists. The Enemy, the precursor of Toy Love, started with the aim of becoming a successful band through signing to a record company and making records. Despite the do-it-yourself playing ethos of punk not until after their experiences with Toy Love did the former members of The Enemy realize that the industry was unnecessary, that you could do all the music industry does, yourself.⁷ In terms of playing live they had realized this from the beginning. In Dunedin circumstances had dictated it. It is this area of delivering music to an audience that will be discussed first.

⁴ Hamish Kilgour quoted in *Rip It Up*, March 1982, p.13. "You can only learn from Toy Love. . . they tried to be as idealistic as possible and they tried to be honest. They did their best and they got chewed up by the business and that's an example to any band."

⁵ Chris Knox, quoted in *Pointless Exercise*, (broadcast date unknown- probably circa 1981).

⁶ Paul Kean, quoted in uncredited article, Flying Nun Press Files.

⁷ Alec Bathgate quoted in '*Pointless Exercise*.'



Fig 20. *Toy Love*, 1980. (L to R). Alec Bathgate, Mike Dooley, Paul Kean, Jane Walker, Chris Knox.

i)

In New Zealand the live performance of rock music has traditionally been associated with alcohol. This was a product of the shortage of appropriately sized venues. Apart from unlicensed community halls of varying sizes, public bars provided the only suitable venues. These pubs tended to have large lounge bars which were built to house the six o'clock 'swill'. Redundant since the extension of licensing hours, publicans, with encouragement from would-be promoters, turned them into band venues. As music was not a venue's major source of income, the publicans could afford to pick and choose the type of bands that played. In the late 1970s pubs throughout the country excluded punk bands. There were some exceptions, but none existed in Dunedin. The Captain Cook Tavern and the Lion/Gardens Tavern were the only large pubs which engaged bands. The Enemy could not get to play at either of these venues. In the case of the Cook, as well as their music, Knox's reputation worked against the band: a reputation built around his abuse of bands and his 'tendency' to break glass.

The Enemy's first performed in public at the Old Beneficiaries Hall, located in central Dunedin. Although that event was organized by the Art School, on subsequent occasions The Enemy organized their own 'gigs' there. After The Enemy's departure the first wave of Dunedin bands played at Coronation Hall in Maori Hill. Owned by the Dunedin City Council, it could be easily hired for \$20.00. The first Coronation Hall gig took place on Saturday 10 May 1980, and featured The Clean, Bored Games and Drone. A cheap P.A. was hired and photo-copied posters were used to publicize the event. With a 'door charge' (admission price) of \$1-50, the three bands managed to make \$100-00 each.⁸ In November of that year the Police organized the first in a series of Sunday afternoon dances at Coronation Hall. These served both as a response to the violence inspired by the band-organized dances and as a fund raising exercise for the Police Social Rugby Team. The Clean

⁸ The Clean Scrapbook (David Kilgour).

Kids going cheap. \$ 1.50

all too often neglected

DANCE

bored
games

THE

CLEAN

the

DRONE

Tickets At Second Hand Record Shop.

CORONATION HALL SAT. 10

NO DOOR SALES!!!

Fig 21. Poster for the first Coronation Hall Dance.

came to play as the organizer was a brother of a former girlfriend of Hamish Kilgour. Due to their timing and their association with the police these functions not surprisingly drew much smaller crowds than the Saturday night dances. On 30 November 60-80 people turned up and The Clean made \$55-00.⁹

On the occasions when the bands played at events they had not organized they tended to be 'ripped-off' by organizers. After playing at the State Theatre with several other bands to a crowd of 300 people, Bored Games received \$10-00 and six cans of beer.¹⁰ Aside from their music the youth of the first wave of Dunedin bands prevented them from playing pubs. On the one occasion Bored Games were scheduled to play at a pub, to support a visiting Auckland band, but they had to pull out at the last minute when Fraser Batts' parents refused to allow him to play in a pub. Being the young punk rockers they were Bored Games simply did not turn up, not bothering to tell the more commercially acceptable touring band they could not play!¹¹ Their youth did, however, mean that school-organized functions provided 'gigs'. The Same played a lunchtime performance at Logan Park High School, as well as playing some songs at the 1980 School Formal. Bored Games did likewise at Kaikorai Valley High School and also had the 'distinction' of winning a school talent quest.¹² With age on their side The Clean continued trying to secure a pub gig. Their only success was a weekend at the Prince of Wales Hotel on 25-27 September 1980. With only 30 people having attended all weekend, the manager turned the power off with an hour to go on the final night.¹³ They were not invited back.

On the weekend of 14-15 August 1981 The Clean and The Verlaines

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Shayne Carter, *op cit.*

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² Bored Games Scrapbook, (Shayne Carter). They won \$100-00 against the competition from the likes of a tap dancer, a magician, the Banana Twins and a skit from the Rugby 1st XV. A performance at a previous Talent Quest was less well received-see Chapter One note 28.

¹³ The Clean Scrapbook (David Kilgour).

became the first bands to play at the Empire Tavern. Despite having a door charge of only 50 cents The Clean made \$86-00. The enthusiasm of self-styled promoter Malcolm Overton had convinced the Empire's publicans, Maureen and John Simpson, to start having bands play at the pub:

We decided to give young bands a go and if people turn out we will keep it going. . . . The place isn't really designed for it, but if it all goes well we could do more to make it better.¹⁴

People did come in large numbers when high profile bands such as The Clean and later The Chills played. There were, however, too many other weekends when 10 or 20 people would turn up for the Simpsons to ever seriously consider alterations.

Overton undoubtedly brought some character to the local music scene, Alastair Galbraith remembered being told to go to York Place to see 'The Earl' if he wanted The Rip to play at The Empire. The musicians saw Overton as a 'shark'. His comments in regards to their unprofessional approach to music did not endear him to the music community either. They therefore collectively forced him out of his control of the booking capacity at the Empire. It had also become apparent to Maureen Simpson that Overton did not do much and that all 'booking' the venue involved was one phone call. The Empire was run on a 'family' basis and there simply was no room for a promoter. The bands had always organized their own gigs and in his involvement with the Empire, Overton did little for his money.¹⁵ In August 1982 Overton moved his attention to The Pitz, an under - age venue he opened up in the basement of a building in Bond St. A bond of loyalty developed between the bands and the Empire. The musicians tried to ensure there were bands playing most weekends; this resulted in Sneaky Feelings and The

¹⁴ undated article from *Otago Daily Times*, Dunedin Music Envelope (Hocken Library).

¹⁵ Overton took 10 % of the total amount of money taken at the door.

THE CLEAN AND THE VERLAINES.



AT THE
EMPIRE TAVERN AUGUST 14 + 15
ENTERTAINMENT STARTS 8.00 PM
50¢ COVER CHARGE

Fig 22. Poster for the first weekend at the Empire.



Fig. 23. John and Maureen Simpson, *The Empire*, 1989. In the top right is John Simpson's 'legendary' cardboard cut - out band. *The Empire's* width is shown in its entirety.

Verlaines playing regularly. By 1983, however, the bands' growing popularity meant they were able to play larger venues like the Cook and later on the Oriental Tavern, although the availability of these venues was very much subject to the managements' discretion. At this stage the more popular bands stopped playing at the Empire, though bands from the community continued to play there until the Simpsons sold it in 1989.¹⁶

The only other regular venue for local music of this ilk was Otago University. The bands and the university did not have as strong a link as at first might be thought. Although the University provided a venue the students did not provide an audience. There were rarely large crowds at student - only functions in the early 1980s, and when there were, alcohol was the draw - card, not the music. In 1981 the University of Otago Rock Society was formed in an attempt to break the pubs' monopoly on venues, as well as to provide an opportunity for young bands to perform.¹⁷ The first gig they organized, open to the general public, was on ANZAC Day, featuring Bored Games and The Chills. The Verlaines and The Stones as well as another local band, Requiem Paradise made their debuts that night. Sneaky Feelings' bassist Kathryn Tyrie's connections with the Otago University Students' Association ensured that they played several varsity shows. Later, The Orange became popular with students. Both these bands were on the periphery of the community. By 1984/5 with the raised profile of the scene, student numbers at gigs both on and off campus increased, and in fact students were probably responsible for sustaining the scene's momentum for a couple of years longer than would have otherwise been the case.

As mentioned in chapter one, the bands also organized various

¹⁶ When John and Maureen Simpson sold The Empire at the end of 1989 in appreciation of their support, The Verlaines returned to play the Simpson's last weekend, supported by a 'supergroup' comprising David Kilgour, Martin Phillipps, Robert Scott, Peter Gutteridge and Alan Haig.

¹⁷ *Otago Daily Times*, 27/5/81. p.17.

private functions in warehouses and vacant practice rooms. There were other venues that would last for short periods of time. These included Pandora's Place and the Dunedin Music Centre. The latter was an unlicensed venue organized as part of a government PEP work scheme.

The bands also played outside of Dunedin. New Zealand's size means there has always been, amongst musicians, an awareness of the musical happenings in other cities. Christchurch music fans had come to Dunedin to see The Enemy, who returned the compliment by playing there. The Enemy and the original Clean went up to Auckland to experience the much-vaunted Auckland punk scene. After a year of limited opportunities to play in Dunedin, in April 1981 the re-formed Clean arranged three nights at Christchurch's alternative music venue, the Gladstone Tavern. Organization was on a more professional level than in Dunedin. The Clean had to sign a contract with the promoter they dealt with. It specified a starting and finishing time for the 'gig' (7.45 pm-9.50 pm) as well as a set percentage off the 'door' for the promoter (15% of the \$2 admission charge). Reasonable crowds over the Monday to Wednesday 'season' saw The Clean make \$195-00 after other expenses, such as the PA, had been accounted for.¹⁸

Since their re-formation in 1980 The Clean had been planning to tour the country for several months, but not in what had become the acknowledged way of doing it. Bands lost money on tours largely because it was thought necessary to use a certain standard of equipment. Cost was incurred in moving the equipment around the country and either buying or hiring the equipment itself. The anti-presentation ethos of the Dunedin bands influenced The Clean's alternative approach to touring:

Robert Scott-"As you get bigger you start using a bigger PA, playing bigger gigs and all that. But what we've done is taken a step back from that and said, look, you don't really need to do that. Bands just get sucked into that. Y'know big PA's, light systems and all that."

David Kilgour-"Countless people come up to us in

¹⁸ The Clean Scrapbook (David Kilgour).

Auckland and say, what a shit PA, where's your light system and all that. It's very easy to say, oh we'd better start building up the PA, we'd better get some more lights."¹⁹

The three members of The Clean worked fulltime for six months to enable the band to tour.²⁰ Having seen where other bands had lost money they ignored lights, purchased a cheap PA and a used Bedford van.²¹ The attitude to touring was a continuation of the low-key, relaxed approach of the Dunedin bands. From May until the end of June The Clean played in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch.

The tour had been organized without a manager. There was already a contact in Christchurch with the Gladstone, a friend booked the Terminus in Wellington, and they arrived in Auckland without any dates planned.²² Through an Auckland friend, David Merrit, they supported the band he managed, the Screaming MeeMees. The success of this saw them headline at the same venue, the Rhumba, two weeks later.²³ The Clean then proceeded to play regularly in Auckland, even making it into the Auckland Battle of the Bands Final.²⁴ Martin Phillipps accompanied The Clean on this tour, helping move gear and mix the sound.²⁵

From this point on The Clean toured the country continuously

¹⁹ *In Touch*, November 1981, p.14

Listener, 16/1/82, p.39. The Clean's attitude is in sharp contrast to the attitude of Auckland band Penknife Glides, who admitted they would be lucky if they only owed \$3 000- \$5 000 at the end of their summer tour-"We could break even if we compromised our shows. . . but we are not prepared to sacrifice our PA and lights."

²⁰ The Clean Scrapbook (David Kilgour). Hamish Kilgour worked as a journalist at Radio Otago, David Kilgour was window-cleaning and Robert Scott worked for a picture framer.

²¹ *ibid.* The PA cost \$2 061-00, and the van \$3 995-00. The Kilgour's mother, Helen, paid \$1 000-00 towards the van.

²² David Kilgour, *op cit.*

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *Christchurch Press*, 2/7/81, Flying Nun Press File.

²⁵ The Chills had temporarily disbanded when Jane Dodd returned to Britain in May, so Phillipps with nothing else to do, went north with The Clean.

until they broke-up in 1982. In comparison to subsequent years this was "an incredibly healthy time to tour in New Zealand". The feeling that something new and good was happening in music generated the excitement that created this atmosphere.²⁶ This period of constant touring was, however, a contributing factor to the decision to end The Clean:

We like making music for the sake of it and we didn't want to get into a touring thing. We had seen other bands become quite stale from constant touring. our music relied on a certain amount of spontaneity and freshness. . . so we just decided to stop at one point.²⁷

In their approach to touring The Clean showed their contemporaries that it was possible to work from a home base in a low-key manner and succeed, even if that home base was Dunedin. The emphasis remained on playing your music to other people, it did not matter where. On one night The Clean ended up playing at someone's flat after their Wellington performance on 24 September 1981 was broken-up for no apparent reason by baton-wielding policemen.²⁸ These early tours by The Clean and other Dunedin bands helped establish a network which made organizing tours easier when record releases provided the incentive (and the demand) to play out of Dunedin more frequently. Graeme Downes explained this in 1985:

I think we get through things because there's a lot of people in the country that make it really easy to get

²⁶ David Kilgour, op cit.

²⁷ Hamish Kilgour quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald Metro*, 19/5/89, Flying Nun Press Files.

²⁸ David Kilgour, op cit, & The Clean Scrapbook (David Kilgour).

Rip It Up, February 1988, p.20. A similar attitude still existed at the end of the decade as evidenced by The Bats, who included Robert Scott and Toy Love's Paul Kean. Hearing of the cancellation of a major outdoor music festival they were scheduled to play at, while in Taupo, The Bats approached the organizer of the Tokoroa Country Music Festival. They ended up playing some of their 'nicer' songs for 30 minutes.

through things. Like basically it only takes a phone-call to Auckland to say we want to come up and do a gig. Having a network of people around the country like that, it just means the basic things in organizing are just made so much easier, because there's all these people on the other end and happy and willing to do things for you. And I imagine the same things happen the other way-people come down here and they don't have any hassles about accommodation and they can borrow gear if they need to.²⁹

ii)

New Zealand does not have a major indigenous record industry as such. The seven major labels with offices in New Zealand tend to act as agents of their parent companies, releasing records made and paid for in larger markets.³⁰ The multi-national record companies do not actively look for potential local recording artists largely because the potential New Zealand market does not provide a financial return sufficient to warrant the risk of releasing an album. Even in the international market popular music is a very risky business. In 1986 only 15% of the albums released by the American record industry made a profit.³¹ Those that did made a profit make sufficient money to cover the losses incurred by the majority. In New Zealand, with a much smaller population base, investment is harder to recover. An album receiving gold sales or platinum sales status struggles to pay for itself.³² Profitability within the record industry is not only determined by individual consumers but

²⁹ *Rip It Up*, December 1985, p.20.

³⁰ R. Brown, 'Stranded in Paradise...The New Zealand Music Story', *The Catalogue*.
Flying Nun Press Files.

²⁰ Lealand, op cit, p.59.

³² During the period covered by this essay gold status in the New Zealand market equaled 7 500 sales, platinum 15 000 sales. By the end of the 1980s this had been increased to 10 000 and 20 000 respectively.

also by the use of records as inputs for other media, notably radio.³³ State and private commercial radio stations, however, refuse to play all but a select number of local releases. Those that are played are either gimmick songs or those that copy overseas styles to the extent of being all but indistinguishable from their foreign 'inspiration'. This refusal to play local music has in recent years resulted in an unsuccessful demand from local music supporters for a compulsory New Zealand music quota to be imposed on radio stations.

Multi-national labels do still release the occasional local record. In the late 1970s it was perceived by successful New Zealand band Hello Sailor that there was no point in releasing an album locally if it was not also released in Australia.³⁴ By the middle of the 1980s the most active major labels, in terms of releasing local musicians, were Festival, WEA and Virgin.³⁵ Within the restricted market described above they do experience some success on the New Zealand album and singles sales charts.³⁶ Such 'success' tends to be an annual occurrence for the record industry as a whole. The traditional domination of the New Zealand Music Awards by one artist or band provides ample evidence of this.

In the first half of the 1980s, however, the most successful label was the independent, Mushroom Records which achieved two double platinum albums with DD Smash and the Dance Exponents. This success resulted in the label becoming a distinct company rather than a

³³ Frith, op cit, p.105.

³⁴ quoted in *Rip It Up*, August 1977, p.8.

³⁵ Brown, op cit.

³⁶ Bryan Staff, 'The Art of the Charts', *North and South*, pp.78 & 82 (date unknown-personal collection). In May 1975 the Recording Industry of New Zealand began publishing a weekly sales chart commissioned from Heylan. In 1977 they took over management of the charts. The information comes from 95 chart-returning shops from which 80 are used in any given week. Which shops are used from week to week and the actual units sold are kept secret to avoid rigging of the charts. Albums consistently outsell singles in New Zealand. In fact singles only comprise 4% of the \$71 million dollar market. Staff estimates that on average the entire Top 50 may sell only 12 000 units.

mere New Zealand outpost of its Australian head office. Mushroom's success is significant as it symbolizes the importance of independent labels in the growth of local music. It must be noted that Mushroom for all intents and purposes, operates in the same manner and to the same scale as a major label.

The limited major - label interest in New Zealand encouraged the growth of independent locally owned labels in the 1980s. With the exception of Mushroom these labels fulfilled a "grassroots filling-a-need function."³⁷ Independent labels, generally run by one or two people, people who lead a life of part-time jobs on low incomes tended to have a lot more in common with the bands they recorded and their audiences than the local branches of American and European record companies.³⁸ They are there, Brown argued, because they had to be there. He singled out Flying Nun, Jayrem and Warrior as labels which drew from strong communities for which they are the only outlet.³⁹ Independent labels, therefore, tended to release specific musical genres. For example, by the middle of the 1980s three labels Maui, Jayrem and Warrior, supported young Maori artists.

In the 1980s independent labels proliferated in the wake of the success of the post-punk labels which had lifted New Zealand music out of a rut, in which there seemed to be only a choice " between pubwork singing Rolling Stones' songs or Ray Woolfdom." ⁴⁰ These labels, most notably the Auckland based Propeller Records and Ripper Records, and Christchurch's Flying Nun, were considerably less business - oriented than those they were to inspire. Their inspiration had been drawn from the British punk explosion which in eighteen months produced 120 independent record companies.⁴¹ The British labels were clearly

³⁷ Brown, op cit.

³⁸ *Listener* 14/11/81 p.94.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Listener* 10/4/82 p.76. Ray Woolf was a middle of the road cabaret singer.

distinguished from earlier independents by their numbers, size and geographical location (outside of London). Size aside, the major difference between the punk-independent labels and multi-nationals was the former's refusal to pay attention to the sales charts. Reaching the top twenty was the only purpose mainstream record companies had in mind when they recorded and released a single.⁴² By ignoring the charts small labels dispensed with the need for expensive productions, promotional staff and the other overheads of chart-oriented companies. This meant they could work to break-even figures of 2 000 sales as opposed to 20 000-23 000 sales needed by the majors.⁴³ This do-it-yourself attitude demystified the record-making process. One band, Scritti Politti, even printed the cost breakdown of their single on its backcover.⁴⁴ It was a "reaction to the mainstream pop world where companies perceive spaces in the market, constructing images for bands that become more important than any music that is created, all with the ultimate aim of 'shifting units'".⁴⁵

Ripper Records and Propeller Records formed to complement the punk scene that had emerged in Auckland towards the end of the 1970s the same scene which had attracted The Enemy to Auckland in 1978. Ripper Records began in late 1979 when radio station 1ZM employee, Bryan Staff, decided to release a compilation of 'demos' by six Auckland bands he had been playing on his weekly half hour New Zealand music show. The album was called AK. 79 and sold out its initial pressing of 300 copies within a week.⁴⁶ This success, as well as encouraging Staff to

⁴¹ Lang, op cit p.16.

⁴² ibid p.9

⁴³ ibid p.10. The sales requirements for mainstream labels were high not only because of each recording's individual expense. A successful record also had to cover the costs of those records that failed. The limited number of releases by an independent label meant this was not a consideration in calculating profit sales figures.

⁴⁴ Laing, op cit, p.17.

⁴⁵ P. McKessar, 'Flying Nun Records', *Music New Zealand* p.10, Flying Nun Press Files.

⁴⁶ Dix, op cit, p.276.

release singles, also inspired record store-assistant Simon Grigg to launch Propeller Records with a single by his flatmate's band, The Features.⁴⁷ Propeller's Class of 81 compilation album showed that it now reflected what was new in Auckland music, or to be more precise what was happening on the North Shore, where half the bands on the album came from. In attempting to release albums by two of the bands on the compilation, Blam Blam Blam and the Screaming MeeMees, Propeller overstretched its limited resources and slowly faded away. Propeller had been encouraged to release the albums due to Blam Blam Blam's two Top Ten hits in 1981 and the Screaming MeeMees number one single, 'See Me Go', the only New Zealand single ever to enter the charts at number one.⁴⁸

In Christchurch a record shop assistant, Roger Shepherd, became aware that due to the efforts of the Auckland independents New Zealand bands were selling records for the first time in anyone's memory.⁴⁹ After three years 'sampling' Christchurch's tertiary institutions, Shepherd's job of selling records was more in line with his love of music. Totally unmusical himself he had become an out and out fan of the South Island music scene:

There was just so much great music around that was never going to be recorded. If it had been happening in London or New York people would have said, 'this is where its AT.'⁵⁰

Since the late 1970s there had been a thriving music scene in Christchurch and to a lesser extent Dunedin, which Shepherd believed deserved the same opportunities Propeller and Ripper were according Auckland bands.⁵¹ Although ignorant of how to organize a record

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p.277

⁴⁸ *ibid*, pp. 278-80.

⁴⁹ interview with Roger Shepherd, 7/2/91.

⁵⁰ *Stilleto* 21 (March 1985), Flying Nun Press Files.

⁵¹ Dix, *op cit*, p.282. Assisted by the efforts of Arnold van Bussell, who had set up an eight track tape recorder in his lounge under the name of Nightshift Studio, and ex-member of Toy Love, Paul Kean, who owned a four track tape recorder, three Christchurch bands had produced do-it-yourself releases: the Gordons, Newtones, and Playthings.

company he had a name for his new venture, Flying Nun. He registered the name and set-up the company on 13 May 1981 at a cost of \$250-00. In releasing records Shepherd had a definite aim, but it was not to sell records as such. He aimed to document what was happening ; to record music that was not being recorded.⁵² He knew that a minority audience existed out there and so ignored the pop charts. His experience in the retail trade meant that Shepherd also knew that you could not realistically expect to make money from a single in New Zealand. The Flying Nun philosophy was, therefore, similar to that of all independent labels and not dissimilar to that of the Dunedin bands.

The first bands Shepherd approached were The Clean and Christchurch's the Pin Group. He had been impressed on hearing The Clean in Dunedin:

I remember seeing The Clean in a local hall. A lot of people thought they were awful, but I thought: "This is unbelievable", even though they played the same song four times.⁵³

On their way back from Auckland, The Clean recorded their first single, 'Tally Ho', over the 7/8 July 1981.⁵⁴ David Kilgour wrote the lyrics on the first morning before they went to Nightshift Studios.⁵⁵ Martin Phillipps played Robert Scott's organ riff , partially as a thank-you for his help on the tour.⁵⁶ The single was released sometime in August, with a pressing of 300 copies.⁵⁷ In its first week it entered the charts at number 23, climbing to number 19 the following week, before gradually descending out of the Top 50. The Pin Group's 'Ambivalence' spent one week in the charts at number 36.

Pleasantly surprised by this success, Shepherd arranged two more

⁵² Roger Shepherd, op cit.

⁵³ quoted in *Stilleto* 21, op cit.

⁵⁴ The Clean Scrapbook (David Kilgour).

⁵⁵ Robert Scott, op cit.

⁵⁶ David Kilgour, op cit.

⁵⁷ The casual nature Flying Nun has been run on can be seen in the fact that no record had been kept of release dates. To give a rough idea, a list of record releases has been compiled using the review dates in *Rip It Up*, see Appendix 3

releases for these bands. The Clean's 'Boodle Boodle Boodle' EP was even more successful.⁵⁸ Released in late October 1981 it entered the charts at number 5, before dropping further back into the Top 20, only to resurface at number 5 in January 1982. All in all 'Boodle Boodle Boodle' spent six months on the charts and it became the largest selling New Zealand single in 1982.⁵⁹ This success surprised Shepherd even more. He dashed off a hand written note to The Clean:

I spose you've heard the news. What's it like to be rock 'n' roll stars? I find the whole development a bit frightening. Great but frightening. I've organized a 2nd pressing of 750. I thought "why not take the risk". Why not? ⁶⁰

The success of this recording launched the label and later subsidized the more esoteric Flying Nun releases. In the short term, The Clean's success encouraged Shepherd to greatly expand his planned releases, and to release other Dunedin bands: The Chills, The Verlaines, Sneaky Feelings and The Stones.

Roger Shepherd, as a fan of these bands, shared a similar aesthetic to the Dunedin musicians which ensured a supportive and mutually beneficial relationship between bands and label. This was particularly apparent in relation to the priority given to the idea of a good song:

I think the songs are really important. That's the thing that's the real strength for an awful lot of Dunedin bands I think. I don't think playing technique is important really, as long as the band can get the general idea across. I quite like a bit of roughness myself.⁶¹

Shepherd also shared a similar abhorrence of 'fashion':

Fashion is a really dangerous thing for music, its got

⁵⁸ *Rip It Up*, March, 1983, p.14. An EP is an Extended Play single. It is a 12 inch single as opposed to the normal 7 inch single. This means it generally contains 4 or 6 songs as opposed to the two on a 7 inch single.

⁵⁹ It was eventually to sell close to 7 500 copies.

⁶⁰ The Clean Scrapbook (David Kilgour).

⁶¹ Roger Shepherd quoted in *Juke*, 28/3/87, Flying Nun Press Files.

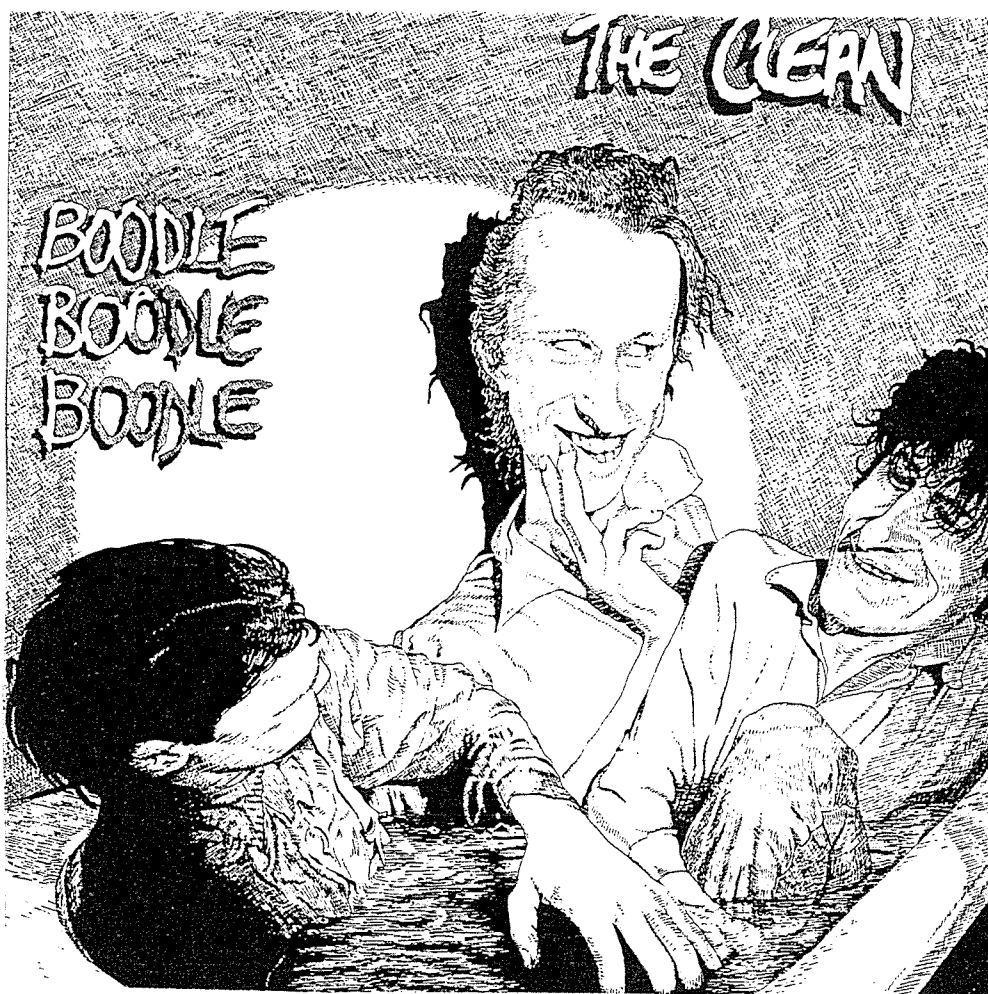


Fig. 24. The Cover of The Clean's 'Boodle Boodle Boodle' EP.

nothing to do with quality, its like pyramid selling - the idea that you can sell something again and again.⁶²

More important though was Shepherd's attitude to the role of a record label:

Bands should be responsible for as much as possible - it's their record not mine. If anything I'm a hindrance between them and their audience, but I'd like to think I'm less of a hindrance than a lot of record companies.⁶³

Flying Nun, therefore, provided the Dunedin bands with a label that operated with the same aesthetic that they did. It operated completely outside the established music industry. In practice this meant that control remained with the label and therefore largely with the bands to a much greater extent than previous New Zealand independent labels. The Dunedin bands could get their music to a wider audience without losing either their autonomy or their control of their music. This contrasted sharply with the community's perception of the relationship of bands to a multi-national label.

To survive Flying Nun operated on a restricted budget, saving money wherever possible, primarily in distribution and recording. Unlike Propeller and Ripper, Flying Nun did not use a major label to distribute its releases to the country's record shops. Shepherd relied on friends in the other main centres and a mail order service to supply the rest of the country.⁶⁴ As a result the production of records followed a fairly set pattern. Shepherd sent the recording to Wellington where E.M.I. cut the master disc and Polygram pressed the record. Ian Dalziel, a former Toy Love stage hand now living in Wellington, would then pick up the records. Touring bands, friends and volunteers distributed the records to shops, road and rail freight being a last resort. Somewhere along the chain the records would be put into the covers, which occasionally had

⁶² quoted in uncredited article in the Flying Nun Press Files.

⁶³ Roger Shepherd quoted in *Otago Daily Times*, 6/7/83, Flying Nun Press Files.

⁶⁴ *Listener* 31/7/82, p77. After a year of operating, mail orders accounted for 25% of the label's sales.

to be glued. In Auckland flatmates, Chris Knox and Doug Hood, and in Dunedin Roy Colbert, took charge of distribution and ensured Shepherd received the money from sales. No-one worked for money.⁶⁵

According to Shepherd Flying Nun survived as a label because "everyone pitched in to ensure it would". There were no contracts for bands or distributors. Relations did on occasions become stressed, and the payment of royalties to bands periodically surfaced as a problem.⁶⁶ To survive, the label needed flexibility, therefore bands were not paid on a regular basis. Shepherd kept a running total, with bands receiving money when required, generally for touring or a subsequent recording.⁶⁷ The amount of royalties a band received depended on the nature of their deal with Flying Nun. There were a number of different scenarios: a band could pay for everything and just use Flying Nun to distribute the record, sometimes the label would pay for the recording, or give a band a lump sum, with the musicians paying the balance if the record went over budget. When the recording was completed Flying Nun would pay for the record to be pressed and the covers to be printed.⁶⁸

The label's art work also remained the band's responsibility, and as such Flying Nun retained the outlook of an early independent punk label. Unlike most labels, either independent or multi-national, Flying Nun did not even have its own logo for record labels; bands designed their own. In some instances bands even devised a numbering system solely for their releases.⁶⁹ Needless to say the cover art was the bands' responsibility as well. As Paul McKessar has pointed out the emphasis here is on "'art' far more than carefully posed shots of pouting

⁶⁵ *ibid*, pp.76-7.

⁶⁶ Roger Shepherd, *op cit*, & *Canta*, 24/7/84, Flying Nun Press Files.

⁶⁷ Roger Shepherd, *op cit*.

⁶⁸ *ibid*.

⁶⁹ As most labels did Flying Nun normally used a numbering system using its initials, for example FN 014 is the catalogue number for The Verlaines' 'Death and the Maiden' single. The Chills, however, used a different system and their records are numbered COLD 001 etc., Sneaky Feelings use FEEL 001 etc. 'BUCK 001 is the catalogue number for The Stones' 'Another Disc Another Dollar' EP.

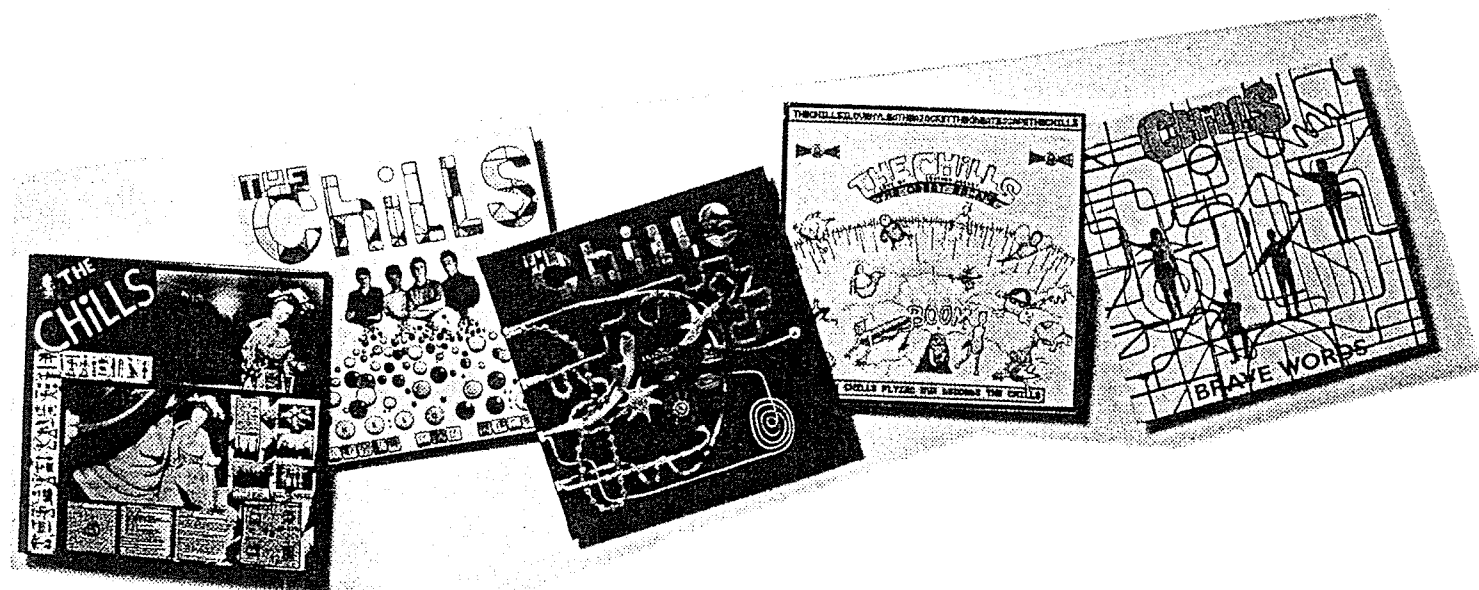


Fig 25. Examples of artwork of The Chills' records and posters.

rockstars." The covers tended to be art work by band members or friends.⁷⁰ Covers were not considered as a marketing device ; a way in which records could be sold to people who did not know the band.⁷¹

Recording was the area in which expenses were most considerably reduced.⁷² In the initial years recording studios were largely ignored in favour of Chris Knox's T.E.A.C four track. Knox had bought this soon after Toy Love split up in September 1980. In the middle of the following year Alec Bathgate flew up to Auckland where he and Knox recorded a three song record which was released under the moniker of the Tall Dwarfs on Propeller offshoot, Furtive. John Dix described the reaction to that recording session:

They knew they'd managed to capture the elusive guitar sound which three Toy Love singles, one album and countless demo sessions had failed to deliver. Here in his bedroom! On an ancient four track machine! It was a revelation and one which Knox was determined to share with like- minded musicians.⁷³

Although Knox had a philosophical commitment to a four-track recording as against the larger track studio recordings, other musicians on Flying Nun did not share his view. Knox believed that a faultless

⁷⁰ McKessar, op cit.

⁷¹ Martin Phillipps, op cit.

⁷² *Listener*, 31/10/81, p.78, 19/6/82, p.54, David Kilgour op cit, *The Stones Scrapbook*, (Jeff Batts) & the *Listener*, 6/11/82, p.82.

The average recording rates in a 24 track studio at this time were \$50-00 per hour. Based on this the *Listener* claimed that a two song single would cost approximately \$1 000-00 to record. By accepting a lower standard of recording The Clean recorded 'Tally Ho' in an eight track home studio over two days for \$50-00. In 1982, Propeller Records released two albums, one by Blam Blam Blam took 250 hours to record, and with discounted rates cost \$21 000-00. At the same time The Clean recorded the 'Great Sounds Great . . .' EP over a two and a half day period on a four track for no cost other than the price of the tape. Even when Flying Nun bands moved into studios they were smaller, less expensive studios, admittedly producing a lesser quality product in terms of sound. What was more important for the Dunedin bands was getting a record out. The Stones recorded their EP in Auckland for \$725-00. Bored Games re-formed especially to record an EP at the end of 1982. The afternoon session at 4XO's studio in Dunedin cost \$110-00.

⁷³ Dix, op cit p.250

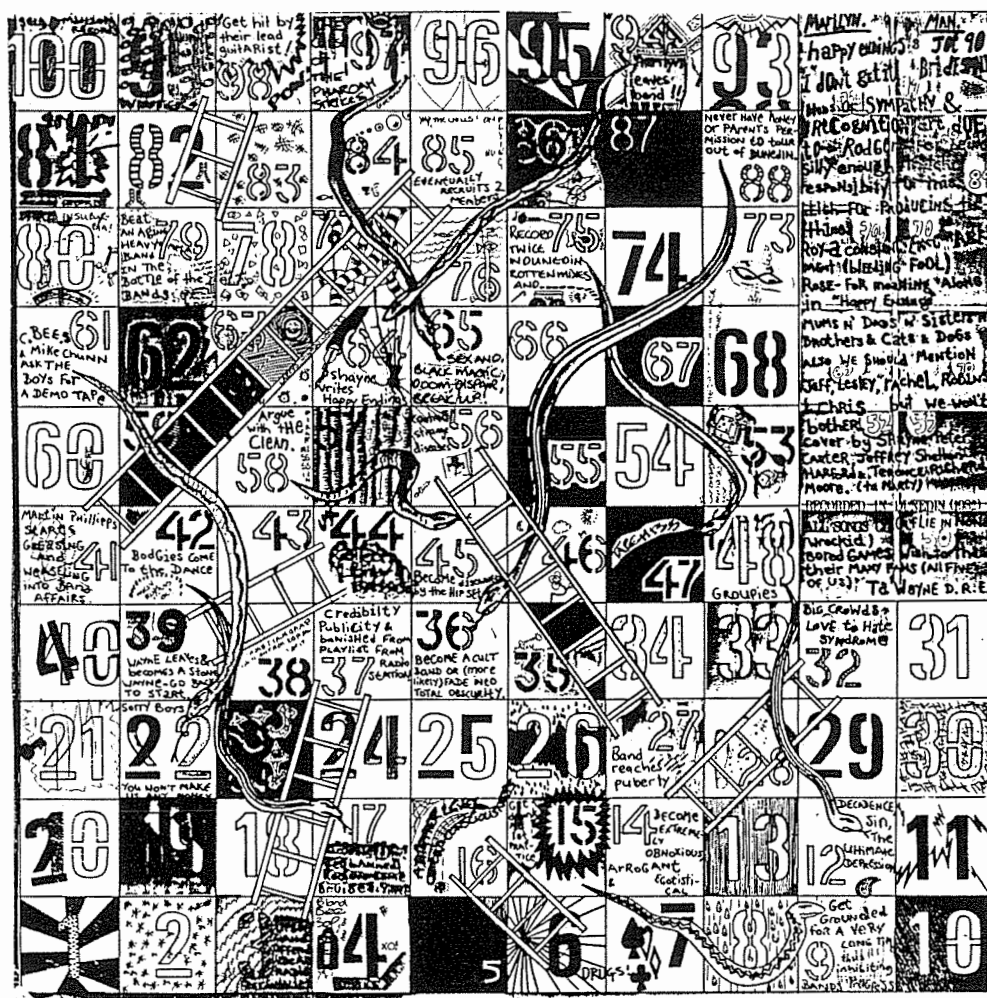


Fig 26. Artwork for Bored Games' posthumous Flying Nun release. The band re-formed in 1982 to record the EP.

four track recording, too often deprived a song of its spontaneity, the finished product owing more to studio expertise than the actual performers.⁷⁴ Apart from its relative cheapness, the four track had, in Flying Nun's initial years, one other major attraction for the other musicians: it afforded them a control over recording unobtainable in a studio. For The Clean, for instance, use of the four track recording meant they did not have to deal with either an engineer or equipment they did not know. The people running studios were not trusted. Groups such as The Clean had a genuine concern that they would end up recording a sound other than their own because the engineer did not understand what they were trying to do.⁷⁵

We didn't like the people who ran the studios. We liked the closest thing to live music and we didn't like impediments between the music and the machinery. . . . We had also seen the disaster of the Toy Love album.⁷⁶

Shepherd's success in allowing Dunedin bands to make recordings without risking their integrity persuaded several Dunedin bands to commit songs to vinyl that were recorded in a 'low-tech' way with minimum fuss. Perhaps, as Knox claimed, this new enthusiasm for recording reflected the fact that the majority of Dunedin musicians were record 'junkies' and wanted to get their own records out.⁷⁷ Although not a new or unique ethos, it was one few artists in New Zealand were in a position to put into practice.

The Dunedin bands still had a desire to use the more advanced equipment a larger studio offered.⁷⁸ When The Clean toured to Auckland prior to recording 'Tally Ho' they approached the owner of

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ David Kilgour, *op cit.*

⁷⁶ Hamish Kilgour, quoted in *Garage* 3.

⁷⁷ Chris Knox, *op cit.*

⁷⁸ Hamish Kilgour, quoted in *New Zealand Times*, 22/11/81, Flying Nun Press Files. "It would be nice to play around in a 24 track studio, but it would all be so money oriented and in the hands of business people."

Harlequin Studios, Doug Rogers. To a band which had the utmost faith in their own ability, Rogers' offhand manner and his belief that there was no commercial potential in their songs confirmed The Clean's worst fears about studios; he had come on like an L.A. record producer who would transform their sound.⁷⁹ Next time they were in Auckland, they therefore recorded what became 'Boodle Boodle Boodle' over a two-and-a-half day period in a hall using Knox's four track, with former Enemy and Toy Love soundman (and Clean vocalist) Doug Hood operating a hired mixing desk.⁸⁰

In March 1982 Chris Knox and Doug Hood were in Christchurch with Knox's four track and recorded The Clean, Tall Dwarfs, Christchurch's Mainly Spaniards, and Dunedin bands The Chills, The Verlaines, The Stones, and Sneaky Feelings for records to be released by Shepherd. The last four contributed a side apiece to what was to be called the Dunedin Double 12". As well as giving the bands and Flying Nun the Knoxian seal of approval, this release focussed the attention of the national music media on Dunedin. The four Dunedin bands went up to Christchurch in groups of two, playing at the Star and Garter that weekend, and spending a day recording.⁸¹ Sneaky Feelings and The Verlaines went to Christchurch together. Each band recorded on the same day, Sneaky Feelings in the morning and The Verlaines in the afternoon. As with all the bands, Hood and Knox tried to give Sneaky Feelings what they wanted; recording the music as opposed to producing it. The conditions were primitive. The result was a credit to Knox and Hood, and illustrated that there were varying degrees of do-it-yourself:

With one song on the last of the four tracks we had to put the lead vocal, the backing vocal and a tambourine. We couldn't get the balance right. Kathryn who was

⁷⁹ Hamish Kilgour, op cit.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

David Kilgour, op cit. Although 'Tally Ho' had been recorded in Nightshift Studio, this was not a studio as such. It was an eight track recorder set up in the front room of a house, and therefore was not too far removed from the four track bedroom idea (see note 51).

⁸¹ The Gladstone had been closed due to violence.

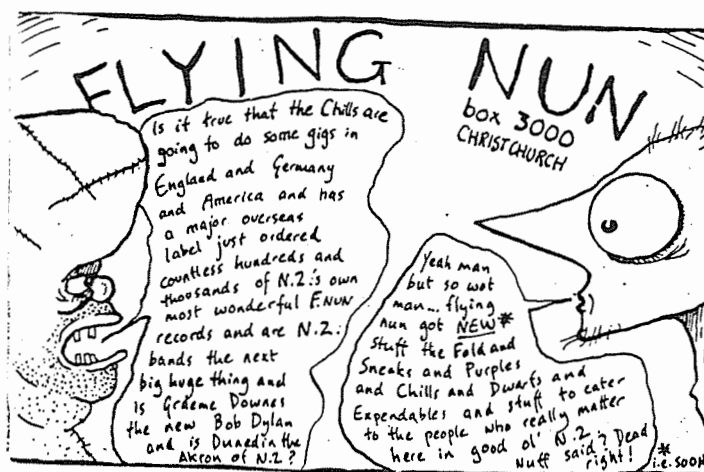
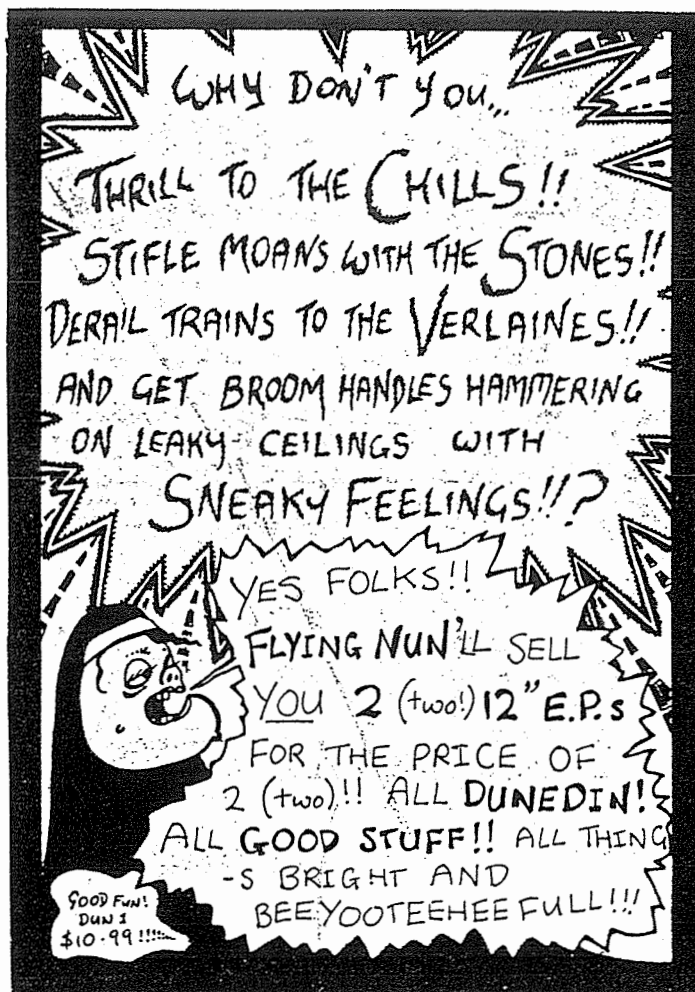


Fig. 27. Examples of Flying Nun's hand drawn advertisements.

playing the tambourine was under a pile of blankets and mattresses to try and get the right [sound] level. So every time the chorus started we would be standing in the room trying to keep a straight face and singing while this thing in the corner came to life.⁸²

The over-riding factor for the bands was that they retained control. The recording process reflected the bands' low-key approach, with an emphasis on spontaneity.⁸³ Something that could not be achieved with the engineers in multi-track recording studios. During Knox and Hood's visit, The Clean, now domiciled in Christchurch, recorded their second EP, 'Great Sounds Great. . .', as Chris Knox explained:

. . . we started off really serious, thinking we're going to record The Clean really sounding like The Clean. But by the second day we were so hung over and so forth, things went really silly! So we went daft, just recording any old thing - and it came out really neat.⁸⁴

These recordings increased Flying Nun's profile. The desire to promote records also led to more Dunedin bands playing in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.⁸⁵ While in Auckland the bands would

⁸² David Pine, op cit.

⁸³ David Kilgour, quoted in *Garage 3*. "[Great Sounds Great . . .] was not planned as far as what songs we were gonna do. Most of it was decided on the spot. 'On Again' was done in about ten minutes."

⁸⁴ quoted in *New Zealand Times*, 8/8/82, p.27.

⁸⁵ Rachel Phillipps, op cit, *The Stones Scrapbook* (Jeff Batts).

By the end of 1982 The Chills, The Stones and The Verlaines had all played and recorded in Auckland. The Chills had been the first to tour north in May 1982, but not without the line-up hassles that have plagued the band throughout its career. Drummer Alan Haig had left for The Verlaines to be replaced by Martyn Bull, and only days before the band were due to leave Fraser Batts left. He was hurriedly replaced by former keyboardist Rachel Phillipps. Sixteen year old Rachel was intensely homesick in Auckland, and when her boyfriend, Jeff Batts, turned up, she returned with him to Dunedin. The Chills completed the tour and recording ('Pink Frost') as a three piece. The bands were able to a tour without any financial cost to themselves personally. When in Auckland in December The Stones made \$363-00 from one gig. Overall they came out of the tour having made \$36-00 each!

incorporate some recording , initially still on Knox's four track, and then using recording studios with like-minded people engineering , such as Doug Hood, Terry King, Terry Moore and Phil Yule. The move into studios also signalled a change in the attitude to recording. The Dunedin bands had taken on the punk attitude of wanting to get a band's live sound on vinyl. A further rationale for wanting to replicate their live sound in the studio was that no one had seen or heard of you outside of the city, therefore you aimed for a live sound as the best representation of the band.⁸⁶ This had changed by 1983/4, as Graeme Downes explained to *Rip It Up* in December 1985:

Doug (Hood) said to me about two years ago that you've got to forget the live thing when you go into the studio, because if you try and do anything like what you want to do live it's a pale representation of the real thing, because it hasn't got the power of the visuals or the volume and all that to make it work in a powerful way. So you have to totally forget about that and reconstruct the song almost, as far as how many instruments you use and what you do to get something like the same effect as a live performance.⁸⁷

This change in approach occurred at various times in the career's of different bands. In 1985 Shayne Carter still argued for the idea of not only capturing a band's live sound but also playing live in the studio.⁸⁸ As bands progressed on to making full length albums they tended to recognize, however, the need to make a distinction between the live version of a song and a studio version of a song.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Shayne Carter, op cit.

⁸⁷ quoted in *Rip It Up*, December 1985, p.18.

⁸⁸ quoted in *Rip It Up*, July 1985, p.4. "Because the last one ['The Double B side'] we went in with the old studio thing of recording the drums and then recording the guitar on top of that. . . and when you do that and record things separately you lose the whole feel of a band playing together and what makes a band work; the interaction between people. . .this record ['Cut It Out'] was recorded really live, the guitars recorded in the same room as each other, turned up really loud and all of us playing together- the band actually played live on each song. So there's a couple of mistakes in there, which were purely through desperation and lack of time. But it still sounds really live and good."

As the 1980s progressed Doug Hood began to direct his attention towards promotions and therefore continued to be an important catalyst for the bands. Hood's enthusiasm and energy resulted in all the Dunedin based Flying Nun bands playing and recording in Auckland, and where necessary either, making the musicians believe in themselves, or reinforcing pre-existing self belief. In 1984 he was tour manager on the 'Loony Tour', a name he took when he formed his own promotions company later in the year. The tour consisted of Auckland band Children's Hour, Christchurch band They Were Expendable, and Dunedin bands The Chills and the Double Happys. For the two Dunedin groups it was an important tour. Both were essentially new bands so the 24 'gigs' enabled them to establish a line-up and, for Phillipps and Carter in particular, to put into practice their increasing commitment to music and to further their growing musical ambition.⁹⁰

In this respect the development of Flying Nun and the bands went 'hand in hand'. Flying Nun remained a part-time obsession for Shepherd, who retained his job in the retail trade in the first half of the 1980s, although by 1985, Gary Cope had become involved and Hamish Kilgour had become the label's first employee. Shepherd continued

⁸⁹ *Rip it Up*, December 1986, p.16. The most obvious example of this is Sneaky Feelings. What became their debut album, 'Send You', started off as an EP. It was done very much as a live recording, with few overdubs, unlike its successor, 'Sentimental Education' - "It [Send You] was very much the sound of us all playing together and not sticking on much afterwards. . .Whereas on the new album we thought about every song and built them up from a basic backing track. So every song had the sound that suited it, whereas Send You was very continuous". 'Sentimental Education' was recorded in a 16 Track Studio and cost \$10 000.

⁹⁰ School friend John Collie had been drafted into the Double Happys just before the tour had begun. The Chills had been out of action since their return from Auckland in 1982. Drummer Martyn Bull had been diagnosed as having leukemia in late 1982. Bull's illness and subsequent death on 18 July 1983 greatly affected Phillipps. At first the bands future was uncertain. A new line-up was eventually gathered together, and debuted under the name A Wrinkle in Time in December 1983. Reverting to The Chills, the band then joined the Loony Tour, having only that one public performance behind them.

working at the Record factory until just prior to the label's move to Auckland in 1988. The fact that Flying Nun had nothing to do with the mainstream record industry, accentuated by its location in Christchurch, had drawbacks. "We spent ten years trying to find efficient ways of doing certain things that industry people had done for years."⁹¹ There were also recurring problems. The most frequent was a delay in a record's release. Any scheduled release dates came to be treated with skepticism and then as a joke. It was soon accepted Flying Nun operated in its own time zone. Two weeks Flying Nun-time could equal anything up to six months GMT. Problems tended to stem from dealing with the one record-pressing plant in New Zealand.⁹² Records had to be recut and some even got lost in the mail. The other major problem, reflecting Shepherd's lack of business experience, was that Flying Nun ended up having all its cash flow tied up in stock, leaving none to assist bands in recording.⁹³

The longer Flying Nun existed the more organized it became, and therefore the more beneficial it became to the bands involved. Graeme Downes explained:

Roger's working hard and its starting to look very organized. It just works both ways. I mean Flying Nun is really working hard at getting everything rolling with the record, and Roger says 'Get us some photos, get us this, get us that', and because Roger's being really motivated we think, 'Fuck better do something'. It's a really good atmosphere at the moment I think.⁹⁴

Other Dunedin bands were less than enthusiastic about Flying Nun,

⁹¹ Roger Shepherd, op cit.

⁹² A difficulty which increased when records had to be pressed in Australia after its closure in 1988. This led to the first of three distribution deals with three different labels: WEA, Festival, and Mushroom.

⁹³ Roger Shepherd, op cit.

⁹⁴ quoted in *Rip It Up*, December 1985, p.20.

particularly younger bands like The Rip, which released a self-financed EP in 1984, through Flying Nun:

It is really good that there are record companies like Flying Nun, but they still don't cater for what they are supposed to cater for. I'm not being nasty and I'm not afraid of saying it-they don't. They weren't willing to take us on.⁹⁵

Most bands, however, enjoyed their relationship with Flying Nun.

The Chills' ambition, and success, hastened Flying Nun's development.⁹⁶ Under Doug Hood's management they toured throughout 1985 to raise \$25 000-00 to enable them to go to Britain. They achieved this, leaving in October and returning in December. The Chills' saw the British tour not only as an attempt to increase their profile, but also that of Flying Nun:

I think its really good, I like the idea of going over and representing Flying Nun and other New Zealand bands. The way Flying Nun has been built up, there has been a lot of respect among everyone for the other bands involved.⁹⁷

The trip to Britain was very much a journey into the unknown. The Chills did not know what to expect. It had been traditional for New Zealand bands if they got in the position to travel overseas, to go to Australia. Toy Love's failure to make an impact in Australia in 1980 and the advice of alternative Australian bands, the Go-Betweens and Hunters and Collectors, had led The Chills to decide to go straight to England. The intention was to make contacts and attempt to capitalize on the good reviews their imported records had been receiving in the

⁹⁵ Alastair Galbraith quoted in *Critic*, 25/9/84.

⁹⁶ Martin Phillipps, quoted in *Rip It Up*, June 1985, p.20. "They are getting professional all the time. They're sort of growing with us really. Yeah big demands have come in from overseas. They'll just have to grow. They'll have to think about it an awful lot, but everyone's right into it. . ."

⁹⁷ Terry Moore quoted in *ibid*.

British music press. The band had no thought of any commercial success, something those involved in the mainstream music industry could not comprehend. They could only think in terms of "the potential for larger markets":

Even though the publicity surrounding The Chills is enormous the standard they are setting will almost certainly stop them at the exit lounge of Auckland Airport. Overseas success is never going to come just from reliance on a collection of good songs.⁹⁸

The above comments by Mike Chunn, a former member of New Zealand's most internationally successful band, Split Enz, and now head of Mushroom Records' New Zealand office, reinforced yet again what The Chills were reacting against. The mainstream music industry could not think outside of their own definition of success and good music. Image was important and The Chills did not have an image.

The Chills had, by their definition, a successful tour of England. One product was a UK release through British independent label Creation Records. The "Kaleidoscope World" compilation album, released in March 1986 to ecstatic reviews, sold over 10 000 copies in reaching no. 3 on the Independent Charts. This success also led later in the year to the opening of Flying Nun UK, which soon established distribution links with German label, Normal. The Chills were unable to take advantage of this success as by the middle of 1986 Phillipps had no band. By December Phillipps had re-formed The Chills for the tenth time and after touring New Zealand the band returned to Britain where they recorded their debut album.

The recording in Britain was done in a 24 track studio, The Chills had graduated from Knox's four track to a 16 track for their two most recent New Zealand recordings. Their increasing profile and that of Flying Nun generally had meant not only recording studios could be

⁹⁸ Mike Chunn quoted in *Metro*, May 1985, Flying Nun Press Files.

afforded but like-minded people were able to be in a position to engineer the records. In hindsight, however, Phillipps was grateful for the way his recording career had developed:

I'm glad we started from a four track and worked up because it means we are aware of the recording process more than a lot of bands are, who maybe have it paid for by their companies. We've paid for all our own recording lately so I think we're aware of time and so on.⁹⁹

Dix argued that this approach indicates a philosophy unique in New Zealand music:

The philosophy that the Flying Nun-Knox-Hood school introduced was that young bands should avoid technological overkill; the argument being that up-market recordings can't capture an inexperienced band's sound as it really is. The message is; let the recorded sound develop as the band matures. The Flying Nun catalogue is filled with classic examples.¹⁰⁰

To argue for such a 'philosophy' is to argue with hindsight and out of context. As this chapter has shown such an approach was dictated both by financial necessity and the bands' desire to remain in control of their music. The relatively low standard of production that resulted meant the Flying Nun releases differed from the majority of other records. This difference was to be fundamental in the music media's creation of the 'Dunedin Sound'.

⁹⁹ quoted in *Rip It Up*, June 1985, p.20.

¹⁰⁰ Dix, op cit, p. 250.

Chapter Four - *The Creation of the "Dunedin Sound":*

"Do they have a McDonalds down there ? "

An obvious way to measure the impact of rock/pop music is by record sales. In 1976 New Zealand's per-capita purchase of records made it the sixth ranking country in the world.¹ By 1987 the retail turnover of the record industry was in excess of \$65 million.² The majority of that money was spent on foreign recording artists, and only 4% of it was spent on singles.³ As a percentage of overall sales the most successful years for New Zealand records have been 1981 and 1982 when local releases comprised 18% and 15% respectively of overall record sales.⁴ It is assumed the figures for these years reflect the impact of the newly formed independent labels on the New Zealand market. The somewhat casual nature of Flying Nun's early operations means that there are no sales figures for records, leaving chart-placings as the only measure of a record's sales. Beyond the point of noting that the records did not have a major impact on the sales charts, this is of only limited worth for Flying Nun releases . Of the 46 singles released by Dunedin bands on Flying Nun between 1981 and 1988, 27 appeared on the Top 50 singles charts, while 2 of the 9 albums released charted. Only five singles appeared in the Top Ten, two each from The Clean and The Chills, and the

¹ *Rip It Up*, August 1977, p.10.

² Staff, op cit, p.58.

³ see Chapter Three, note 36.

⁴ Lealand, op cit, Table 1, p.61. Lealand's figures cover the period 1957-59 and 1966-1984. The average percentage for the 1970s was 7.6%. Although Lealand does not specify it is presumed that the figures refer only to single sales, as Dix (p. 342) states that it was not until the establishment of the New Zealand Recording Industry in 1975 that album sales in New Zealand were recorded.

Netherworld Dancing Toys debut release. Including those singles, ten releases appeared in the Top Twenty. Five singles spent more than ten weeks on the charts, three from The Chills, one from Straitjacket Fits and The Clean's 'Boodle Boodle Boodle'. The latter spent 26 weeks on the chart and is, apart from The Chills' 1990 album 'Submarine Bells', the only Flying Nun release to gain gold record status.

This limited success is not surprising. The music was not geared towards the charts and was consequently ignored by mainstream/commercial radio.⁵ New Zealand's six student radio stations have always been enthusiastic supporters of local music. The lack of interest in New Zealand music shown by commercial radio contributed to the reluctance of major labels to invest in local music ; the rationale being, if people do not hear the record they will not buy it. In 1981 only one Auckland radio station, the privately owned Radio Hauraki, play-listed the Screaming Mee Mees' 'See Me Go' despite the fact that it was the country's top selling single. ⁶ The situation in Dunedin was probably worse than it was in the rest of the country, as Martin Phillipps explained in 1985, though for The Chills at least the situation improved by the end of the 1980s when northern stations grudgingly and sporadically gave the band daytime airplay.

I think they're [commercial radio] just pathetic. They're missing out on what we can do for Dunedin as a band. We aren't calling ourselves an Auckland band, or an Australian band. . . we're promoting this city and we're proud of this city.⁷

⁵ Brown, op cit, Martin Phillipps, op cit & David Kilgour op cit. Brown argued that "being able to discount virtually out of hand any mainstream radio play means many artists find their own production values, generally one's that radio people don't like." This, however, did not apply to early Flying Nun releases. The Clean chose to record 'Tally Ho' because they thought it might have had some chance of gaining radio play. Likewise the vocals on 'Kaliedoscope World', one of The Chills' contributions to the Dunedin Double Twelve Inch, were mixed higher than normally in an attempt to attract airplay.

⁶ *Listener*, 28/11/81, p.52.

As the 1980s progressed the most influential medium for promoting a single was television. In New Zealand in this period there were two regular music programmes, Ready to Roll and Radio With Pictures. Ready To Roll, a chart-based show, counted down the weekly Top Twenty with the occasional new release and 'high flyer shown. It attracted close to one million viewers each week and is still a very influential show.⁸ Ready To Roll, by its very nature was unsupportive of New Zealand music, particularly Flying Nun releases. Radio With Pictures, an album-based show directed at an older market, was more supportive of local music. As well as showing New Zealand bands it also paid attention to the local music scene. At the end of 1982 and 1984 it ran a 15 minute item on events in each of the main centres.

Flying Nun had a groundswell of support which was largely responsible for some releases appearing on the charts, even if they only spent one week in the lower reaches of the Top 50. This support made more impact in something like the *Rip It Up* Reader's Poll than it did in the sales charts. In the 1981 poll, The Clean dominated most categories except best group, in which they were only placed fourth behind the Propeller bands.⁹ The 1982 poll was The Chills turn, and in 1983 it was The Verlaines who, in a quiet year for Flying Nun, were the only act from the label to feature. Despite not charting their single, 'Death and the Maiden', was voted best 'NZ Single' and fourth 'Best Single of the Year' in the open section. In 1984, as a result of the success of 'Pink Frost', it was, again, The Chills, although unlike previous years Flying Nun bands were spread throughout the poll results.

Rip It Up itself was an avid supporter of New Zealand music. In

⁷ quoted in the *Midweek*, 1/5/85.

⁸ *Listener*, 4/9/82, p.14

⁹ They topped the 'Best New Group' and 'Best NZ 45' categories, and David Kilgour was voted best NZ Guitarist, Robert Scott third 'Best NZ Bassist', and Hamish Kilgour the fourth - equal 'Best NZ Drummer.'

his position of deputy-editor during the early 1980s, Russell Brown gave strong support to Flying Nun bands, to such an extent that his writings were continually criticized by some readers. Founded in June 1977, *Rip It Up* was the most recent in a series of ill-fated attempts to launch a New Zealand music magazine. Like its immediate predecessor, *Hot Licks*, *Rip It Up* was a free magazine, funding itself through advertising. Unlike its predecessors *Rip It Up* did not stop after a handful of issues. In fact circulation steadily grew from 12 000 in 1977 to 30 000 in the mid-1980s. The magazine quickly became an enthusiastic advocate for local music, though it reflected the New Zealand music industry's bias towards foreign artists in its emphasis on interviews with overseas acts. It ran live reviews from Dunedin, however, and in June 1978 added a column on Dunedin's music scene to its main-centre 'Rumours Column'. This was initially written by Otago Boys' High School teacher and music critic, George Kay. The Dunedin column tended towards a listing of the line-up changes and the formation of new bands within the city's established covers' band scene.¹⁰ By 1981, Kay began to include more information on bands such as The Clean, Bored Games, and The Chills. On all but one occasion his live reviews were of out-of-town bands. The reviews of Dunedin bands were left to second-hand record shop owner and music critic, Roy Colbert. These, as his review of The Enemy's first 'gig' shows, reflected his musical tastes, which were very influential on the future Flying Nun musicians.

ii)

After the high sales of local records in 1981 the New Zealand music scene did not look healthy in the first few months of 1982.

¹⁰ One of Kay's favourite bands was the Heavenly Bodies. Mick Dawson had formed this band while he was a member of The Enemy, to satisfy his desire to play his favourite songs from the 1960s. He had re-formed it when he left The Enemy at the end of 1979. The Heavenly Bodies finally split-up in September 1980, when Dawson left for Australia.

Propeller Records, which had provided much of the initiative in 1981, had begun its ill-fated move from singles to albums, and as Simon Grigg told *Rip It Up*, the label was pessimistic about Auckland's future as a music centre.

No innovative bands are coming through because there are no under-age venues. The Auckland scene will be in a sorry state by later this year if no innovative bands emerge.¹¹

As Chris Bourke pointed out in his summary of the first ten years of the Auckland based *Rip It Up*, the magazine unwittingly provided the answer to this problem in its following issue. The May 1982 issue featured The Clean on the cover and contained a South Island special, under the heading, "do they have a McDonalds down there?"¹² This article, as with most in the magazine, was done to promote a record release. In this case the recordings Knox and Hood had produced in Christchurch two months earlier. Apart from a Clean interview the previous November this was the first feature on South Island bands. The lack of coverage of South Island music was more the product of the music industry bias to events in Auckland rather than *Rip It Up*'s.

Rip It Up's review of the four band Flying Nun compilation, 'Dunedin Double Twelve Inch', did not use the label 'Dunedin Sound', though the term was obviously in currency by the time of the record's release. Interviews with Dunedin bands at this time mentioned the term. In criticising Dunedin bands' lack of professionalism, for instance, the promoter Malcolm Overton, talked about "the so-called 'Dunedin Sound' bands", while three months later, in May 1982, Martin Phillipps told the *Auckland Star* that "the 'Dunedin Sound' is the sound of honesty."¹³

¹¹ Simon Grigg, quoted in *Rip It Up*, April 1982, p.2

¹² Chris Bourke quoted in *Rip It Up*, June 1982, p.22.

¹³ Overton, quoted in *Otago Daily Times*, 9/2/82 p.23 & Phillipps quoted in *Auckland*



Fig. 28. The Chills' quarter share of the gatefold sleeve for the Dunedin Double Twelve Inch.

Star 28/5/82, Flying Nun Press Files.

The first mention of the label in the sources consulted was in Wellington magazine *In Touch*, in November 1981. In response to the question of whether there was a New Zealand sound The Clean's guitarist, David Kilgour, replied, "No but I think there is a Dunedin Sound. You get to Auckland and what the bands are trying to do seems to be manufactured."



Fig. 29. The Stones' quarter share of the gatefold sleeve for the Dunedin Double Twelve Inch.

At this stage the phrase appeared to refer specifically to the four bands on the 'Dunedin Double Twelve Inch' and The Clean. The former record had, because of its title, focused attention on the city of Dunedin. The custom of labelling music in relation to its geographical origin had been common in rock music, and for that reason the term the 'Dunedin Sound' is not all that surprising. The 1960s had provided the two most notable examples : the 'Mersey Sound' or the 'Mersey Beat' as a label for the 'explosion' of music from Liverpool in the wake of The Beatles' success, and the 'San Francisco Sound' which centred around the music of Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead.

New Zealand's music media quite definitely focused on Dunedin at this time.¹⁴ Albeit on a flippant level, the headline for *Rip It Up*'s 1982 article illustrated an important attitude in the creation of the 'Dunedin Sound' - the notion that Dunedin is 'down there' - geographically and culturally below not only the North Island but even Christchurch. In the case of the fashion conscious Auckland music media, Dunedin's apparent 'ignorance' of the latest musical trends reinforced the idea of the city as a cultural backwater. Indeed, before the establishment of Flying Nun, few Dunedin bands of any description had released records let alone achieved commercial success. The two most recent Dunedin bands to achieve success, prior to The Clean, had done so with 'gimmicky' singles. In December 1977 Mother Goose had limited success with a song entitled 'Baked Beans'. It was not until 1980 that a Dunedin based band reached the top ten on the Recording Industry sales chart when the Knobz spent six weeks on the charts with 'Culture', a "turgid piece of modern-day bubblegum inspired by the Muldoon-record sales tax debate."¹⁵ The attitude of both the music media and New Zealand music followers towards Dunedin is summarised by John Dix

¹⁴ The music media refers to *Rip It Up*, Radio With Pictures, and the music columns of the major newspapers and periodicals such as the *Listener*.

¹⁵ Dix, op cit, p.284.

in this extract from *Stranded in Paradise*:

Knobz's success did little to convince rock fans that there was anything important happening down in Dunedin, or that Toy Love hadn't been an oddity. George Kay's Rip It Up 'Rumours' column spoke of great things but he had to say that, ay ? . . . Until 1981 there was little reason for outsiders to take a particular interest in the Dunedin music scene. A Dunedin rock column ? Ha ! Why not a Te Kuiti rock column ? ¹⁶

The Clean's success in 1981 gave outsiders a reason to look at Dunedin. The four-band compilation of 1982 focused attention on the southern city. The bands, as well as sharing a city, were also united by a set of production values which were, at this stage, unique in New Zealand. This did give the records a common sound relative to what else was being produced elsewhere in New Zealand, and in particular other bands in the charts. Although circumstances dictated that this attitude was shared by all the Flying Nun bands, the Christchurch bands did not gain the media focus the Dunedin bands did. Christchurch did not have a Clean or an eponymous compilation record, and unlike Dunedin it had previously produced bands acceptable to the music media.

Compared to the national ignorance prior to 1982, in that year the music media showed considerable interest in the Dunedin music scene. The self - belief of the musicians concerned tended to exaggerate this interest. In June 1982 The Stones' Jeff Batts told *Critic* :

That's what I'm scared of with the Dunedin hype. If it does become a trend that's the end of it. It's obvious it would burn itself out, like the punk thing.¹⁷

Although Batts's fear was unfounded and perhaps slightly arrogant, media interest definitely existed. No one, however, was

¹⁶ *ibid*, pp 284-5.

¹⁷ Jeff Batts quoted in *Critic* 14/6/82.

prepared to define the term, 'Dunedin Sound'. In 1983 the *Otago Daily Times* ran an article in which the paper's music writer asked the question: 'what is or was the Dunedin Sound? ' He argued that in 1982 the 'Dunedin Sound' was heralded by some as a new musical movement while being rubbished by others. "The name may not have been definitive but people around the country liked the music and the label stuck."¹⁸ In speculating that "perhaps any original local music whether it is punk, blues, MOR or heavy metal fits the label 'Dunedin Sound'", this article's conclusion anticipated the broadening of the 'Dunedin Sound' that would occur when the label's usage moved from the specialist music media to the general media.¹⁹ This occurred in 1984-5 and paralleled The Chills' increasingly high profile which, in this period, saw them have two top twenty singles and one top five single, as well as winning the 'Most Promising Group' and 'Most Promising Male Vocalist' awards at the 1984 New Zealand Music Awards. The Chills had by this stage definitely taken over the mantle vacated by The Clean in 1982.

Until 1985, apart from music programmes, television in New Zealand had ignored the 'Dunedin Sound'. In that year other departments began to acknowledge the music's existence. The children's television programme, 'Video Dispatch', ran an item on the 'Dunedin Sound'. It included an interview with Shayne Carter and discussed the building of Mike Pearce's recording studio. The patronising attitude to the southern city remained in the presenter's comment at the conclusion of the item: "It's good to see things happening in Dunedin." By 1987 The Chills national profile was such that a road accident on their national tour was deemed of sufficient interest to be covered on the main news bulletin.²⁰

¹⁸ *Otago Daily Times*, 29/?/83, p19.

¹⁹ *ibid.* MOR refers to Middle of the Road music.

²⁰ In 1989, The Clean's reunion tour was featured on news programme, the Holmes show.

The confusion the mainstream media created for themselves in their literal interpretation of the 'Dunedin Sound' is most evident in the fifteen minute item on Dunedin music which appeared on the television arts programme, Kaleidoscope, in 1986. The item focused on the Dunedin aspect of the 'Dunedin Sound'. Recognizing that local musicians cringed at the label 'Dunedin Sound', the programme argued that the term was appropriate to what was considered a different environment and musical product which had grown out of Dunedin. Acknowledging that a band such as the Netherworld Dancing Toys was not considered to be part of the 'Dunedin Sound', the programme instead argued that they were "part of a consistently creative core of musicians that are more prolific in Dunedin than anywhere else in the country." This, then, was the definition of the 'Dunedin Sound' the programme used. The construction of the item meant that comments from Chris Knox and Radio With Pictures' producer, Brent Hansen, which referred specifically to the city's Flying Nun bands and their precursors, were spread among interviews with musicians who were not part of that group. These musicians were making exactly the type of music that bands such as The Chills and the Double Happys were reacting against ; this supported the false impression that a band was a 'Dunedin Sound' band merely because it came from Dunedin.

The Kaleidoscope item discussed Rational Records, a label set up in 1986 by twenty-year old student, Cam Olsen, to release a compilation album of Dunedin bands. Dunedin's first record label, unlike Flying Nun, it aimed directly for the record charts. Olsen believed that

the bands generally represent a large part of the music scene that is not visible to the rest of the country . . . those of us involved are confident that the record is of a high enough standard to be taken seriously by the national industry.²¹

²¹ quoted in *Rip It Up* September 1986, p.6.

On the album were the Idles who in the 1981 - 1985 period along , with the Netherworld Dancing Toys, were the only non 'Dunedin Sound' bands from Dunedin to release records. The Netherworld Dancing Toys' Malcolm Black explained the position of these bands:

The 'Dunedin Sound' or those bands that are put into that tag, they are probably what's unique about Dunedin so they'll get a lot of exposure as concerns Dunedin. But there are a lot of other more mainstream bands, I guess we're like that, the Backdoor Blues Band, Working With Walt, The Idles, who maybe could come out of any city but are still doing good things.²²

There was a certain amount of antagonism between these musicians, particularly the Idles and the Flying Nun bands. These musicians could not understand why the 'Dunedin Sound' bands were recording and touring when, compared to the city's other musicians, they could not play their instruments. The 'Dunedin Sound' musicians saw these bands as uncreative, playing formula rock music. A split occurred between ideas - people and players. A former local covers musician, John Dodd, discussed the 'Dunedin Sound' bands in this way:

I think the bands could be a lot more experimental. I think they have an inflated reputation. People think they are doing new things but their sound is heavily influenced by the sixties. Their musicianship and creativity is not very innovative.²³

The bands associated in the 'Dunedin Sound' did not happily accept the label, particularly in the literal way it was used by 1985, to apply to any band that came from Dunedin. At this stage, indeed, the Dunedin bands were becoming more individual in their sound. The old common denominators, low standard of studio production and

²²quoted on 'Dunedin 1984', Radio With Pictures.

²³quoted in the *Midweek*, 21/11/84, p.9

technical ineptitude, were no longer there. As we saw in the preceding chapter some bands were starting to use multi-track studios while others still adhered to the punk ethos of attempting to capture a band's live sound on record. In 1985 Dunedin band, Crystal Zoom, put out a single, 'Dunedin Sound on 45'. This band did not belong to this tradition of bands but, with guest appearances from David Kilgour and Martin Phillipps, they took an off-beat look at the 'phenomena'. Phillipps explained:

I did most of the bass lines, some vocals and guitar. It's all very lighthearted. It's good to make fun of the whole 'Dunedin Sound' thing. The term was a silly one to come up with. The bands referred to by the term were dissimilar.²⁴

With the principal exponents of the 'Dunedin Sound' rejecting the label, and actively working to discredit it, the confusion about the meaning of the 'Dunedin Sound', or even its existence is not suprising.

iii)

Throughout the 1980s the overseas music press responded favourably to the sporadic arrival of Flying Nun releases. The label 'Dunedin Sound' was not used. Instead the music was viewed as a product of New Zealand as a whole. Its uniqueness was seen, however, as a result of its origin.²⁵ Therefore labels like 'Kiwibeat' and 'New Zealand Sound' were used. Such labelling was more the domain of the

²⁴ quoted in *Critic* 24/5/85 p.12

²⁵ *Melody Maker*, (date unknown), Flying Nun Press Files. "Like their compatriots The Chills, The Clean's name is perfect in its evocation of the unpolluted and rarefied airiness of New Zealand rock, the chaste levitation we've come to expect from Flying Nun."

Contrast (US), October 1989, Flying Nun Press Files. "For the better part of a decade , Martin Phillipps and his band The Chills have made polar - pop that transcends all limitations of common categorization , that goes beyond our perception of modern popular music. One that is as beautiful and mysterious as their home New Zealand itself."

British and European music press, the American media acknowledging the individuality of each band. These differing reactions tended to reflect the stage of development bands were at when they were first encountered by the overseas music press. The British responded to the Dunedin bands early recordings in the period from 1982- 1985. The American media, however, first became aware of Flying Nun bands towards the end of the 1980s when independent label, Homestead Records, began to release the bands' albums, by which stage each bands idiosyncratic sound had become more apparent, as they became more proficient both on their instruments and in the studio.

The first British reviews of Flying Nun releases began to appear in 1985, when in the wake of The Chills' first visit, Flying Nun began to export limited numbers of records to the United Kingdom. These received ecstatic reviews in the music press:

Biggest surprise of the month is New Zealand's Flying Nun Records. With three excellent releases from The Chills and others, they stand head and shoulders above all others as The Label who are prepared to support real talent without interfering.²⁶

In 1986 the opening of Flying Nun UK and the release of the label's compilation album, *Tuatara*, saw the bands being placed in some sort of context. *Melody Maker* called the record " an historic document indeed" and the *New Musical Express* recognized that some of the songs on the album anticipated the contemporary British scene by four years.²⁷ Although reviews acknowledged the bands were largely from

²⁶ *Zig-Zag*, April 1985, Flying Nun Press Files.

²⁷ *Melody Maker*, 18/10/86, Flying Nun Press Files.

New Musical Express, 11/10/86, p.34, Flying Nun Press Files. "Half of today's British indie scene strives for this effect, yet I've heard none to match 'Death and the Maiden'. . . Tuatara's 'Pink Frost' , a ghostly carousel of lamenting melody, epitomizes how self-effacing need not mean either clumsy or faux naïf, the besetting vices of Britain's shambling generation whose appearance is here so anticipated (and frequently bettered)."

On the Street, 17/5/89, Flying Nun Press Files. Australians also recognized this -"The

Dunedin, the music was seen as symptomatic of New Zealand as a whole. In 1986 *Melody Maker* coined the term 'Kiwibeat'. Neither the term nor the music caught on. Despite the opening of a British branch none of the subsequent Flying Nun releases followed The Chills' 'Kaleidoscope World' and made an impact on the UK Independent Charts. The records continued to get favourable reviews in the press but this did not translate into record sales. As the 1980s progressed the 'colonial' comments appeared more frequently even if the reviewers became confused as to which former colony the bands came from. A review of Straitjacket Fits EP, while acknowledging their New Zealand origin, also managed to mention kangaroos and the 'Outback'.²⁸ By this time the British reviews were of less significance as the Dunedin bands' attentions had turned to America.

In 1987 The Chills had attended the New Music Seminar in New York. This is an annual gathering of independently distributed music industry 'figureheads' and hopefuls. It is also attended by major labels looking around for the 'next big thing'. Although approached by several labels, The Chills held off, eventually signing a seven album deal with Slash Records in 1989 worth an undisclosed six figure sum.²⁹ In 1990 The Chills released 'Submarine Bells', their first major label album.³⁰ This resulted in a dramatic increase in the The Chills' American profile which, with the desire of critics to put the band in context, also increased

Clean's songs taken in the context of the time at which they were recorded are truly remarkable." The Australian music media started taking note of Flying Nun bands when they began to tour across the Tasman in 1987 and 1988. Their response has been similar to that of the Americans and British, though geographical proximity has lead itself to more accurate reporting.

²⁸ undated review from the *New Musical Express*, Flying Nun Press Files.

²⁹ The *Otago Daily Times* gave this development a front page story.

³⁰ As part of the Slash contract Flying Nun remained responsible for distributing The Chills in Australasia. Flying Nun itself had a distribution deal with Mushroom Records Australia. As a result of this Flying Nun is able to claim a gold record for sales of 'Submarine Bells'.

the profile of other present or former Dunedin bands. By this stage the profile of Flying Nun, itself, had increased dramatically in the American alternative music press, and was beginning to spill over into the mainstream music press. The editor of the Independent section of the American music industry 'bible', *Billboard*, declared in 1989 that "there doesn't seem to be anything on Flying Nun which is less than excellent."³¹

To American critics the music was unique. It seemed to represent the place of its creation, New Zealand in general, and Dunedin in particular. All articles on the bands and most detailed reviews of Flying Nun releases contained a paragraph on the 'southern college town of Dunedin', and the music scene it has spawned, a scene Canadian fanzine *Nerve* described as "probably the most exciting, freshest and most distinctive scene anywhere."³² The scene is discussed in the form of a musical lineage starting with The Clean and the \$50-00 recording of 'Tally Ho' - "a three-piece whose lamentably produced garage-pop-punk stood a nation on its head."³³ Facts are generally confused, but the basic story is still there. The *New York Times*, in a review article published in 1990, talked about The Clean playing Sunday afternoon concerts on the University campus to an audience which included Martin Phillipps, Shayne Carter, Graeme Downes, and Roger Shepherd. They did not do this and Shepherd usually lived in Christchurch.

Evelyn McDonnell wrote the most detailed American analysis of the Flying Nun bands for New York's *Village Voice*. Based on her 1990 visit to New Zealand, the article argued that this music is part of a quest for nationalism: "cut off from the rest of the globe, driven by boredom and searching for a native tongue bands like the Chills, the Bats,

³¹ *Billboard*, 22/7/89, Flying Nun Press Files.

³² *Nerve*, October 1987, Flying Nun Press Files.

³³ *On The Street*, 17/5/89.

Straitjacket Fits, the Verlaines, the Clean, and the Tall Dwarfs turned to guitars to create a private space in a public world."³⁴ In a perceptive and factually accurate article McDonnell began the lineage not with The Clean but, correctly, The Enemy, even if her prose tended to the purplish:

It's [Dunedin] the kind of proper Anglo place where all tensions - class, race and psychological - get buried, where any expression of tension is muzzled. Knox's shattered bottles changed all that. Three hundred Dunedinites showed up for The Enemy's first gig. None of them were ever going to be contained by the same bourgeoisie limits again.³⁵

In another article McDonnell wrote that "concentration on the basics has given New Zealand acts a distinctive sound - a quietly determined mix of searing melodies, strummed guitars and intense feeling."³⁶ Within this common approach, however, she recognized that the bands themselves each had an individual sound. According to American critics the bands shared a desire to experiment:

The groups seem to share an openness to experimentation, in taking apart pop and putting it back together again in a way which hadn't previously been considered. . . they sound like nothing else on this planet. This is the sound of young New Zealand.³⁷

Karen Schoemer, also, writing in the *New York Times*, defined that experimentation in terms of the influence of The Clean - their "cue to experiment with guitar textures and dynamics and reorder melodic structures."³⁸ This "individualistic spirit", as well as an avoidance of instrumental solos, Schoemer contended, still united the bands. McDonnell argued that it is the distinguishable cathartic approach to

³⁴ E. McDonnell, op cit, p.23.

³⁵ ibid p.24.

³⁶ in *Elle*, June 1990, Flying Nun Press Files.

³⁷ *Imprint* (date unknown), Flying Nun Press Files

³⁸ *New York Times*, 13/5/90, Flying Nun Press Files.



Fig. 30. The Verlaines, 1990. (L to R). Mike Stoodly, Graeme Downes, Greg Cairns.

song-writing with which, despite the "most rudimentary tools, New Zealand groups have penetrated the high - tech hiphop screen of the pop world and the noise of the [American Independent] scene chasing its own tail, and struck a chord that still hits home."³⁹

1991 has seen two more Dunedin bands sign to major American labels, The Verlaines have joined The Chills at the Warner Brothers subsidiary Slash, while Straitjacket Fits have signed with Arista. The latter deal, conservatively estimated at being worth a \$1 million if it runs its full seven - year duration, is the largest ever involving a New Zealand band. As in Britain, critical recognition has yet to result in commercial success of any degree, although the amount of money and promotion Slash and Arista are prepared to advance, provides the bands with commercial recognition of a sort. The very fact that their music is lauded for its individuality highlights the major difficulty the bands have in succeeding in a commercial market based on the idea of selling the same style again and again. In reality, bands such as The Chills are not aiming for the mainstream American Top Ten. They are just continuing to make the music they want to and disseminating it to as large an audience as practicable, while retaining as much control as possible.

³⁹ McDonnell, op cit.

CONCLUSION:

Whether or not the group of musicians this essay focuses on share a distinct sound depends on the perspective that each listener brings to the music. The term 'Dunedin Sound' was largely used by those people who did not look for style beyond engineering and production. In its 1985 guide to Dunedin music, *Critic*, in arguing that a 'Dunedin Sound' did not exist, pointed out what a discussion of the term usually involved. It was always structured in terms of a musical lineage, and placed great emphasis on who had been in what band previously ; these constantly changing band line-ups would then be described as 'incestuous'. As well as mentioning the word 'psychedelic' at least once, a discussion of the 'Dunedin Sound' had to mention the Velvet Underground and/or various other American bands.¹ As George Kay put it, "sentimentality for garage/primitive sound coupled with journalistic laziness have been responsible for coining and creating the 'Dunedin Sound' myth."²

Kay's initial point is important. It is significant that during their impressionable teenage years and musically formative years, a group of (future) musicians shared a common social experience and were exposed to similar types of music. A consequence of this was a set of shared attitudes that comprised an aesthetic of sorts. This aesthetic was based around the notion of 'dirty' art. At the core of it was the idea of the 'song'. The ability to write what the aesthetic defined as a 'good' song was more important than gaining the skills necessary to perform the song. The lack of importance placed on production was also evident in the musicians' rejection of the normal standards associated with a band's presentation; lights and expensive amplification systems were

¹ *Critic*, 26/2/85, p.17.

² quoted in *Rip It Up* December 1986, p.16.

not used, and photo-copied posters were preferred to glossy, 'professionally' done ones. One of the most crucial elements that was taken from punk rock was the 'do - it - yourself' attitude. Apart from inspiring the musicians to play, it also ensured that they attempted to remain in total control of all aspects of the reproduction of their songs ; from organizing performances to the recording and distribution process. The 'music community' that developed, added the idea of 'doing - it - for - yourself' to the 'do - it - yourself' attitude. This brought with it the belief that the music was authentic ; it was not being made to gain financial reward. As a result of this the bands tended towards a cathartic approach to song-writing which distinguished it from other alternative music. For some of the more committed musicians, notably Martin Phillipps , the idea of 'authentic' music has spawned the almost evangelical notion of wanting to bring good music to people.³

This aesthetic was in part a response to circumstance. The people involved were initially inept musicians, therefore, in hindsight, an emphasis on writing rather than execution proved convenient. There was also no money to put into presenting a 'good show'. Promoters , with the exception of Malcolm Overton, did not exist , because there was little possibility of any financial return. The lack of money available in Dunedin music meant the musicians were not in a position where anyone could force them to do something they did not want to. The small size of the city and the lack of an established bar or club circuit also meant that it was easier and in fact necessary for the bands to organize things themselves.

Although these attitudes and situations were not unique to Dunedin, the city's environment helped foster them more than in other centres. Geographically and in attitude , Dunedin was isolated from what constituted the music industry in New Zealand. Centered in Auckland, this in turn was isolated from the important American and

³ Martin Phillipps, op cit, & Chris Knox, op cit.

British music industries. This distance created in Dunedin a detachment from new fashions, which in creating an awareness of the nature of such developments, fostered a cynical attitude towards trends. In discussions of the 'Dunedin Sound' much has been made of Dunedin's status as a university town. The role of the university is not as significant as this implies. Although by the mid 1980s students provided an audience which sustained the momentum of the scene, its role in the initial years was limited to that of an alternative and not usually sympathetic venue. Its importance in these years comes more from the fact that the student population provided an example of alternative options and life - styles. Unlike provincial towns, teenagers, albeit sub-consciously, were offered an alternative to starting work and a family. The teenagers of the north Dunedin area saw people avoiding these roles and the responsibilities that they entailed; a space existed provided between youth and adult life, between school and work.⁴ The university also had importance in that some of the musicians took up this alternative option and studied for degrees.

Flying Nun brought together the Dunedin musicians with like-minded musicians from Auckland and Christchurch. The formation of Flying Nun by Roger Shepherd gave the bands an outlet which shared a similar aesthetic. Transferred to recording, it became a desire to release records as quickly as possible. Financial restrictions and the desire to work only with friends resulted in a 'low tech' product. The initial interest centered on Dunedin, which because of the desire to release records quickly, appeared to be the most musically productive city in New Zealand. The scene afterall involved only a small group of about 50 people, as Martin Phillipps explains:

I'd say that the 'Dunedin Sound' was a bad thing to call it. It was a very productive time, but it basically came down to a number of key people in Dunedin who were

⁴ This idea is the result of a discussion with Delyn Day.

influenced by the Sex Pistols ,The Enemy and The Clean.⁵

Punk rock and the Sex Pistols were pivotal to the formation of this part of the Dunedin music scene. As Evelyn McDonnell pointed out, punk rock's initiating role for this scene provides a similarity with independent/punk scenes throughout the world.⁶ Punk rock provided the initiative to get up and play music in front of people. A small group of friends were united by their belief that anyone could get up and play music. For these teenagers, music became their form of recreation. Punk rock had given music a sense of menace, an element of excitement it had not previously had for this generation, which when added to the general excitement of being a teenager provided the momentum for a scene to grow. Within this 'music community' varying degrees of ambition developed. Many people who had been 'drafted' in by friends to complete a band line-up stopped playing music as they left school and began to take on the responsibilities of a job and a family. For their friends , music continued to remain a priority, and as the community developed and opportunities opened up, the potential for making music a full-time career began to unfold. The establishment of Flying Nun and the ties it made with labels overseas , enabled the musicians to progress on their own terms. As a community of friends they had developed their skills and values in an environment where their peers were sources of inspiration and criticism rather than competition. As such it was a folk music of sorts. The barrier between audience and performer did not really exist. In travelling around the world it is this aspect that the musicians have discovered to be largely unique.⁷ Martin Phillipps regularly attempted to describe this

⁵ quoted in the *New Zealand Herald*, 16/1/87 , Flying Nun Press Files.

⁶ McDonnell, op cit, p.25.

⁷ Martin Phillipps , op cit.

environment to interviewers:

In the pub where we all played , the Empire , it was just like a modern folk club. You'd get nights where it was so full people would be standing on the bar and tables. It was warm and friendly and the Dunedin winter would be howling outside and lashing at the windows and people would be singing along to stuff like The Clean's 'Oddity' , which is what folk music is all about. It was great, just such a good feeling between the crowd and the bands.⁸

It was this environment that spawned what for New Zealand audiences became known as the 'Dunedin Sound'. A label for an approach to rock/pop music, the uniqueness of which is also now gradually being acknowledged internationally.

⁸ quoted in *Option*, September/October 1987, Flying Nun Press Files.

Secondary Schools Attended

Logan Park High School

Graeme Downes 1975 - 1979

Martin Phillipps 1976 - (August) 1979 , 1980.

Jane Dodd 1976 - 1980

Jonathan Moore 1977 - 1981

Andrew Brough 1977 - 1981

Jeff Batts 1978 - May 1979

Rachel Phillipps 1978 - 1981

Craig Easton 1979

Robbie Muir 1979 - 1983

Alastair Galbraith 1982

Kaikorai Valley High School

Shayne Carter 1977 - 1981

Wayne Elsey 1977 - 1980

Jeff Harford 1977 - 1980

John Collie 1977 - 1981

Graeme Anderson 1977 - 1980

Lesley Paris 1977 - 1980

Otago Boys' High School

David Kilgour 1975 - 1978

Peter Gutteridge 1975 - 1978

Jeff Batts 1975 - 1977

Craig Easton 1975 -1978

David Pine 1975 - 1979

Fraser Batts 1978 -1982

Alastair Galbraith 1979 - 1981

Matthew Bannister 1979

KEY - V = vocals, G = guitar, B =bass, D = drums, K = keyboards, F = flute

*= did not play in a public performance.

Bands : 1978-1990

The Enemy (October 1977 - December 1978)

Chris Knox (V)

Alec Bathgate (G)

Mick Dawson (B)

Mike Dooley (D)

subsequent member(s) - Phil Judd*

Toy Love (January 1979 - October 1980)

Chris Knox (V)

Alec Bathgate (G)

Mike Dooley (D)

Jane Walker (K)

Paul Kean (B)

The Clean (January 1978 - September 1979)

Hamish Kilgour (D/V)

David Kilgour (G/V)

Peter Gutteridge (B)

-subsequent member(s) - Lindsay Hooke (D), Doug Hood (V)

The Same (October 1978 - July 1980)

Jeff Batts (V)

Craig Easton (G)

Martin Phillipps (G/V)

Paul Baird (D)

subsequent member(s) - Gaynor Propsting/Smith (B), Rachel Phillipps (G),

Jane Dodd (B)

Bored Games (June 1979 - mid 1980)

Shayne Carter (V)

Wayne Elsey (B)

Jeff Harford (D)

Fraser Batts (G)

Jonathan Moore (G)

subsequent member(s) -Terry Moore (B)

The Clean (May 1980 - June 1982 , May 1989 - November 1990).

David Kilgour (G/V)

Robert Scott (B/V)

Hamish Kilgour (D/V)

The Chills(November 1980 -)

Martin Phillipps (G/V)

Peter Gutteridge (G/V)

Jane Dodd (B)

Rachel Phillipps (K)

Alan Haig (D)

-subsequent member(s): Fraser Batts (K), Terry Moore (B), Martyn Bull (D), Peter Allison (K), David Kilgour (G) *, Martin Kean (B), Andrew Todd (K) , Caroline Easter (D) , Justin Harwood (B) , Jimmy Stephenson (D) , Jillian Dempster (K).

The Verlaines (mid 1980 -)

Graeme Downes (G/V)

Craig Easton (G) *

Phil Higham (B)

Gregg Kerr (D)

Anita Pillai (K)*

-subsequent member(s) : Alan Haig (D) , Jane Dodd (B) , Caroline Easter (D) , Robbie Yeats (D) , Mike Stoodly (B) , Steve Cournane (D) , Greg Cairns (D)

The Stones (November 1980 - August 1983)

Jeff Batts (B/V)

Wayne Elsey (G/V)

Graeme Anderson (D)

Sneaky Feelings (August 1980 - April 1989)

Matthew Bannister (G/V)

David Pine (G/V)

Martin Durrant (D/V)

Max Satchell (G)

Kathryn Tyrie (B)

-subsequent member(s): John Kelcher (B)

The Rip (November 1981 - August 1986)

Alastair Galbraith (G/V)

Robbie Muir (B)

Matthew Ransom (D)

-subsequent member(s) : Jeff Harford (D)

Look Blue Go Purple (February 1983 - 1988)

Denise Roughan (G/V)

Lesley Paris (D)

Kathy Bull (B)

Kath Webster (G/V)

Norma O'Malley (K/F/V)

Double Happys (September 1983 - July 1985)

Shayne Carter (G/V)

Wayne Elsey (G/V)

(and a drum machine christened Herbie Fuckface)

-subsequent member(s) : John Collie (D)

The Great Unwashed (1983 - December 1984)

David Kilgour (G/V)

Hamish Kilgour (G/D/V)

-subsequent member(s): Peter Gutteridge (B/V) , Ross Humphries (G)

The Puddle (1983 -)

George Henderson (G/V)

Ross Jackson (B)

Lesley Paris (D)

-subsequent member(s) , Peter Gutteridge (B) Christine Voice (K) , Lindsay Maitland (D), Norma O'Malley (K/F), Jenny (K) Norman Dufty (D), Vicki (B).

Wreak Small Speakers on Expensive Stereos (1983 - 1985)

Micheal Morley

Richard Ram

Alpaca Brothers (1984 - 1987)

Bruce Blecher (G/V)

Nick Wilkinson (B/V)

Steve Cournane (D)

The Orange (July 1984 - 1986)

Andrew Brough (G/V)

Jonathan Moore (B)

Peter Bragen (D)

The Moas (1985 - 1986)

Damien Woodhouse (V)

David Pine (B)

William Field (G)

Jamie McLennan (D)

The Weeds (1985 - 1987)

Shayne Carter (G/V)

Robert Scott (B/V)

Micheal Morley (G/V)

Chris Healey (D)

Jeff Harford (V)

John Collie (D)

-subsequent member(s) : Lesley Paris (D)

Straitjacket Fits (1986 -)

Shayne Carter (G/V)

John Collie (D)

David Wood (B)

-subsequent member(s) : Andrew Brough (G/V)

Plagal Grind (1986 -1990)

Alastair Galbraith (G/V)

Peter Jefferies (D/V)

-subsequent member(s) : Jono Lonie (G) , Robbie Muir (B) , David Mitchell (G) , David Saunders (G).

(Plagal Grind released an EP on Port Chalmers based label Xpressway in 1990.)

Stephen (1986 - 1990)

David Kilgour (G/V)

Alf Danielson (B/V)

Geoff Hanoi (D)

subsequent member(s) - Stephen Kilroy (G/V)

Dead C (1987 -)

Bruce Russell (G/V)

Micheal Morley (G/K/V)

Robbie Yeats (D)

Snapper (1987 -)

Peter Gutteridge (G/V)

Christine Voice (K)

Dominic Stones (G)

Alan Haig (D)

The 3Ds (1988 -)

Denise Roughan (B/V)

Dominic Stones (D)

David Mitchell (G/V)

subsequent member(s) - David Saunders (G/V), Rachel King (B)

The following is a list of bands that performed a handful of times or did not get around to releasing a record. Where marked (#) the membership lists are incomplete. This list comes from Robert Scott's notes for an as yet unattempted "band tree".

Heavenly Bodies (1978 - 1980)

Mick Dawson
Kim Barron
Myles White
Neil Dobier

Skin (1979)#

Terry Moore
Jessica Walker
Andrew Strang

Feedback (1979)

G. Kean
Matthew Bannister
Martin Durrant

Stains (1980?)

Damien Woodhouse
David Kilgour
D. Loughery
'Bodge' Armstrong

The Hoods (1980)

Terry Wood
Jeff Harford
David Kilgour
Shayne Carter

Drone (1980)

G. Keane
Lee Wood
Martin Heaps
Paul Baird
A. Blackman

Elevators (1981)#

Christine Voice
Martyn Bull
Hank Van der Vis

Permanant Tourists (1982)#

Martyn Bull
Norma O'Malley

Blue Meanies (1982)

Andrew Brough
Martin Kean
Max Satchell
R. Allen
P. Pankhurst

Sparkling Whine (1982)

Shayne Carter
Jeff Harford
Terry Wood

Silent Prayers (1982)#

Peter Gutteridge
Malcolm Baird
Judith

Bel Curves (1982)

Martyn Bull
Peter Gutteridge
Kathy Bull
Selwyn Andrews

After The Fall (1982)

M. Connor
John Collie
Jeff Harford
Terry Wood

Autistic Children (1982)#

Alastair Galbraith
N. Smith
'Bodge' Armstrong

Craven A's (1983)

Lesley Paris (D)
Terry Moore (B)
David Kilgour (G)
Peter Gutteridge (G)

Newbergs (1983)

Fraser Batts
John Deveraux
Jonathan Moore
Jeff Harford

Red Orchestra (1984)

Bruce Russell
Micheal Morley
Alastair Galbraith

Raith Rovers (1985)

Robert Scott
Andy Scott
Robert Cardy
Jonathan Underhill

Cartilage Family (1982)#

Shayne Carter
Kathy Bull
Peter Gutteridge
Lesley Paris

Paisleys (1982?)#

Bruce Blucher
Selwyn Andrews
Russell deJoux

Jetsons (1983)

Denise Roughan
Micheal Morley
Richard Ram
Lesley Paris

One of These Things (1984)

Denise Roughan
Kath Webster
Kathy Bull
Bruce Blecher

Pink Plastic Gods (1984)

Robert Scott
Bruce Russell
Denise Roughan
Micheal Morley

Delawares (1986)

Gen McCoy
L. Moses
T. Walsh
Christine Voice

Mr. Big Nose (1987)

Robert Scott

David Saunders

Ken Stewart

Alan Haig

Kinder Scout (1987)

Robert Scott

David Kilgour

Micheal Morley

Cyclops (1989-)

Kathy Bull

Bruce Blucher

'Bodge' Armstrong

-subsequent members : Andre Richardson (V),

Peter Jefferies (D)

Appendix 3

Release Dates and Chart Placings 1981 - 1990

This is a list of records released by Dunedin bands on independent record label Flying Nun. As Flying Nun does not have a list of release dates these have been compiled from the review columns of *Rip It Up*. They therefore do not purport to be totally accurate - *Rip It Up*'s monthly publication means a record may have been reviewed up to six weeks after its release. This however is the most accurate available measure for the entire period. The Chart Placings from 1981 - 1987 are from *Stranded In Paradise*. Those for the subsequent years are from the charts printed in the *Dominion Sunday Times*. The first number in bold refers to the records highest chart position, the second to the number of weeks spent on the charts.

1981

September: The Clean - Tally Ho (7") **19**, 7

November: The Clean - Boodle Boodle Boodle (12") **5**, 26

1982

June: The Clean - Great Sounds Great . . . (12") **4**, 9

The Dunedin Double Twelve Inch (12")

September: The Clean - Getting Older (7") **36**, 3

November: Bored Games - Who Killed Colonel Mustard ? (12")

December: The Chills - Rolling Moon (7") **26**, 2

1983

May: Sneaky Feelings - Be My Friend (7") **31**, 3

July: The Verlaines - Death and the Maiden (7")

The Netherworld Dancing Toys - Netherworld Dancing

Toys (EP) 10, 5

The Clean - Oddities (Tape)

August: The Stones - Another Disc Another Dollar (12") 33, 3

September: The Great Unwashed - Clean Out of Our Minds (LP)

The Netherworld Dancing Toys - Trusted Ones (12")

37, 5

1984

April: The Netherworld Dancing Toys - Song and Dance (12")

28, 2

The Great Unwashed - Singles (2x 7") 39, 1

July: The Chills - Pink Frost (7") 17, 18

August: Sneaky Feelings - Send You (LP)

The Verlaines - Ten o'clock in the Afternoon (12") 23, 8

October: Double Happys - Double B-Side (7") 42,

November: The Chills - Doledrums (7") 12, 9

The Rip - Timeless Piece (12")

1985

August: The Chills - The Lost EP (12") 4, 16

Look Blue Go Purple - Bewitched (12") 21, 7

September: Crystal Zoom - Dunedin Sound on 45 (7")

October : Double Happys - Cut It Out (12") 33, 6

Sneaky Feelings - Husband House (12") 16, 7

December: The Verlaines - Hallelujah All The Way Home (LP)

1986

March: Shayne Carter and Peter Jefferies - Randolph's Going
Home (7")

The Weeds - Wheatfields (7")

May: The Orange - Fruit Salad Lives (12")
June: Sneaky Feelings - Better Than Before (12") 34, 2
August: The Clean - Live Dead Clean (12") 23, 5
September: The Chills - Kaleidoscope World (LP) 19, 9
 The Verlaines - Doomsday (12") 37, 1
 Alpaca Brothers - Legless (12")
November: The Puddle - Pop Lib (12")
December: The Chills - I Love My Leather Jacket (7") 4, 11.

1987

January: Sneaky Feelings - Coming True (7")
 Look Blue Go Purple - LBGPEP2 (12") 26, 5
April: Sneaky Feelings - Sentimental Education (LP)
October: The Moas - Spazz Out (12")
 Wreak Small Speakers On Expensive Stereos - River
 Falling Down (EP)

1988

February: The Chills - Brave Words (LP) 24, 4
 Straitjacket Fits - Life in One Chord (12") 16, 10
April: The Rip - Stormed Port (12")
May: The Dead C - DR503 (LP)
 The Chills - Wet Blanket (7")
June: The Verlaines - Bird Dog (LP)
December: Straitjacket Fits - Hail (LP)
 Snapper - Snapper (12")

1989

February : Sneaky Feelings - Hard Love Stories (LP)
September: Stephen - Dumb (12")

1990

June : The Verlaines - Some Disenchanted Evening (LP)

July : The Chills - Submarine Bells (Flying Nun/Slash) (LP) 1, 12

The Chills - Heavenly Pop Hit (7"/12") 2, 7

August : The Clean - Vehicle (LP)

The 3Ds - Fish Tales (12")

November : Straitjacket Fits - Melt (LP)

Songs from Dunedin bands have also appeared on the two
Flying Nun compilation albums : Tuatara - 1984.

In Love With These Times -
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